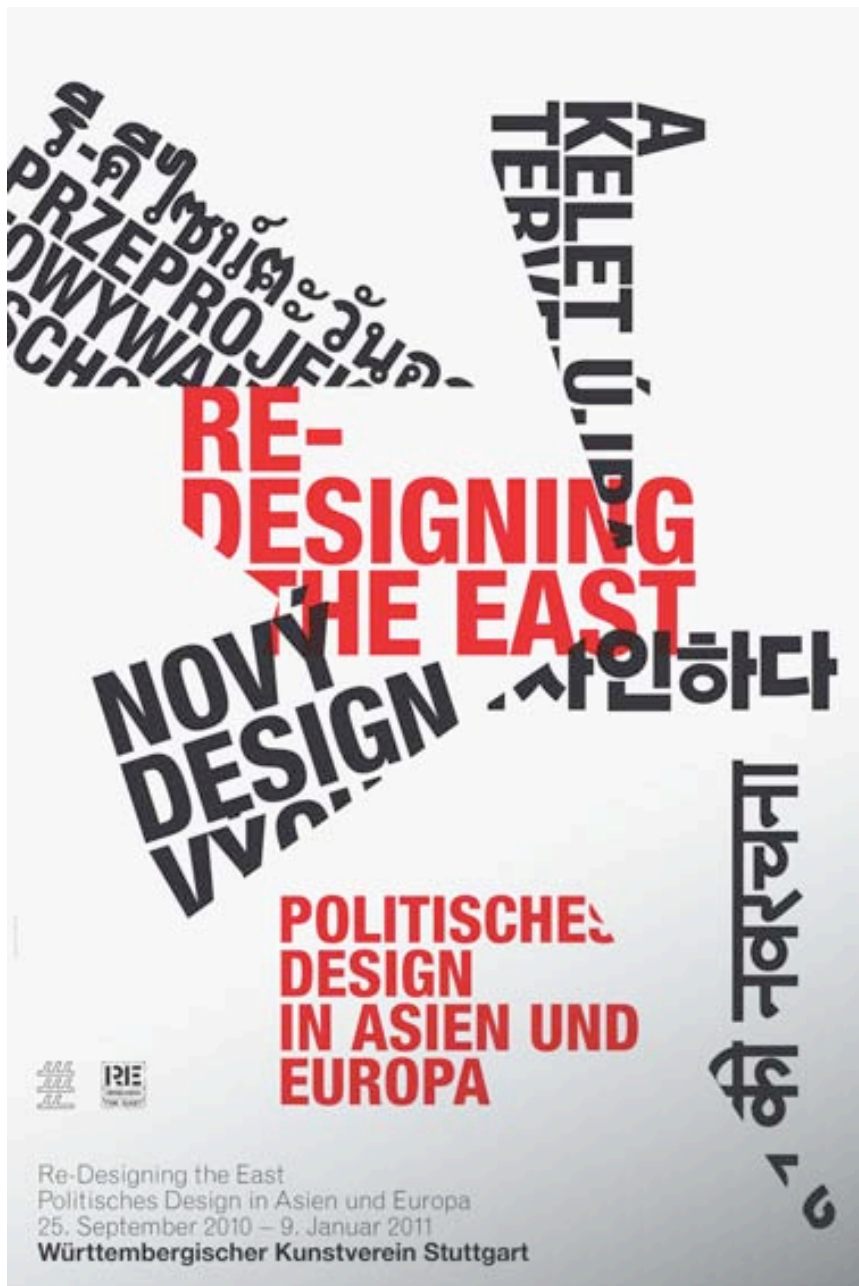


Württembergischer Kunstverein Stuttgart



RE-DESIGNING THE EAST
Political Design in Asia and Europe
September 25, 2010 – January 9, 2011

Press conference: Friday, September 24, 2010, 11 a.m.



RE-DESIGNING THE EAST

Political Design in Asia and Europe

September 25, 2010 – January 9, 2011

Activism of Graphic Imagination (ROK)
Ewa Bałuk-Zaborowska (PL)
Design & People (IND)
Jerzy Janiszewski (PL)
Grzegorz Klaman (PL)
Gerard Lewandowski (PL)
Jan Matoušek (Laboratory) (CZ)
Andrzej Pałowski (PL)
Monika Rak (PL)
Tomasz Sarnecki (PL)
Joska Skalník (CZ)
Marek Sobczyk (PL)
János Sugár (HU)
Noh Suntag (ROK)
Pracha Suveeranont (T)
Michał Szłaga (PL)
Henryk Tomaszewski (PL)
Ania Witkowska (PL)

An exhibition by
Württembergischer Kunstverein Stuttgart
In co-operation with
Trafó Gallery, Budapest
Wyspa Institute of Art, Danzig
Total Museum, Seoul

In conjunction with the project
In Charge. The Role of Political Designers in Transformation

Idea
Keiko Sei

Curators
Maks Bochenek, Hans D. Christ / Iris Dressler, Sethu Das, Nikolett Eross, Tomas Pospiszyl, Keiko Sei, Nathalie Boseul Shin

Introduction

With the exhibition *Re-Designing the East: Political Design in Asia and Europe*, held from September 25, 2010 to January 9, 2011, the Württembergischer Kunstverein is highlighting critical and resistive design practices in (Eastern) Europe and (South/Eastern) Asia from the nineteen-eighties through the present. Of particular focus is the role of both design and designers in the context of sweeping social, political, economic, and cultural upheaval.

Re-Designing the East is based upon a cooperation between the Württembergischer Kunstverein, the Trafó Gallery in Budapest, the Wyspa Institute of Art in Gdansk, and the Total Museum in Seoul. The exhibition comprises six sections, each of which has been developed by different curators from Europe and Asia.

Contexts

Since the early nineteen-nineties, the world order that was familiar up to that time has radically and permanently shifted, especially through the fall of the so-called Eastern Bloc countries as well as through a global neoliberalism and the rampant development of information and communication technologies. The old concepts of the ideological “East” and “West” have become obsolete. In the far away East—as viewed from a Eurocentric perspective—countries like South Korea, Thailand, and India have (besides China) long asserted economic positions of global relevance. The onetime hierarchies between center (the “West”) and periphery (the “rest”) has been disrupted. At the same time, there are numerous conflicts associated with the purported victory of the “Western” models of democracy and capitalism.

The title of the exhibition *Re-Designing the East: Political Design in Asia and Europe* already references the falloff or, in any case, the dubiousness of geopolitical ascriptions like “the East.” At the same time, the upheaval of the nineteen-eighties and nineties in Europe is to be placed into relation with that currently noted in Asia: and this against the backdrop of the question as to which role critical and resistive design practices play within these states of upheaval, meaning within the struggles for political, societal, economic, ecological, and cultural reshaping.

Here emphasis is placed on contexts such as the political transformation prevalent in the nineteen-eighties and nineties in Hungary, Poland, and former Czechoslovakia, as well as on the democratization processes—still accompanied by multifaceted conflicts today—and swift economic developments in India, Thailand, and South Korea.

Positions

The exhibition in the process sheds light on highly divergent design positions. Counting among the historical positions is, for instance, the logo of the *Solidarność* (Solidarity) movement created by Polish designer Jerzy Janiszewski. Also explored is the work of Czech designer Joska Skalník, who was actively involved in the so-called “Velvet Revolution” and who today, however, is faced with the accusation of having been an informant for Czechoslovakia’s secret intelligence system.

Among the positions currently explored is the Indian network Design & People which furthers sociopolitical projects, thus making freely available, along the

lines of the “copyleft,” its creative works as well as its knowledge for noncommercial purposes. The Thai designer Pracha Suveeranont in turn presents his extensive boycott campaign—developed in 2007 and directed against the establishment of a new constitution by election in Thailand—along with other graphic works that reference the current societal and political conflicts within the country.

The South Korean group Activism of Graphic Imagination (A.G.I.) is likewise engaged in activist contexts. Their works demonstrate opposition to the repressive politics reigning in South Korea, which have arisen through unchecked turbocapitalism and also through a newly emerging “Cold War” atmosphere.

The curators participating in the exhibition were given free reign both in conceptualizing their sections and in selecting the involved designers. Here the project fathoms the possibilities and limitations of multiperspectival, process-oriented curating.

A conference will accompany the opening weekend of the exhibition *Re-Designing the East*. Following the exhibition will be a publication on the project.

Contact WKV

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Exhibition's Sections

THAILAND

Vexed Brand Thailand: A Case of Political Design in a Troubled Paradise

Curator: Keiko Sei

Designer: Pracha Suveeranont



© Pracha Suveeranont

Presently, in Thailand, a battle over social influence associated with advancing age of the demigod King is taking place. Widely differing groups are struggling to increase power under the auspices of democracy: a fight which, aside from entailing an increase in violent conflicts, is being carried out to no small degree on a visual level, while being simultaneously subjected to growing censorship. The section curated by Keiko Sei introduces a selection of works by the Thai designer Pracha Suveeranont, whose undertakings include the instigation of a 2007 campaign to boycott the election of a new constitution which had been conceived by the military. His graphic works seize in various ways upon the presently escalating political situation in Thailand.

SOUTH KOREA

Conspiracy by ...

(National Security / The Origin of Wealth / Common Ground)

Curator: Nathalie Boseul Shin

Designers and Artists: Activism of Graphic Imagination, Noh Suntag



© A.G.I. / Noh Suntag; A.G.I.; A.G.I.

Since the 2008 election of Lee Myung-bak as president of South Korea, the country's relations to North Korea have considerably cooled. The newly activated "Cold War" rhetoric are going hand in hand with newly heightened repressions against leftist positions. Intensifying at the same time have been the excesses of an unchecked turbocapitalism in mega-enterprises of re-structuring urban and natural environments. Natalie Boseul Shin presents the collaborative design practices and activities by the design group Activism of Graphic Imagination (A.G.I.) and artist Noh Suntag that oppose the current policies in South Korea. Their positions will be compared to those

currently being implemented in Seoul in the contexts of its celebrations as this year's Capital of Design.

CZECH REPUBLIC

Joska Skalník: Designer of Czechoslovakian Dissent

Curator: Tomáš Pospiszyl

Designers: Jan Matoušek (Laboratory), Joska Skalník



© Joska Skalník / Jan Matoušek (photo)

Tomáš Pospiszyl has focused his section on the work of the dissident graphic designer Joska Skalník, who in the nineteen-eighties in former Czechoslovakia worked, among other things, for the independent underground organization Jazz Section. During the so-called "Velvet Revolution" he advanced to become ringleader of this movement and ultimately took on the role of official advisor to President Václav Havel, who was elected in 1989. Since the nineteen-nineties, suspicions have arisen that Skalník may have operated at the same time for Czechoslovakia's secret intelligence system: an accusation that Skalník has never denied nor confirmed. For the exhibition, Pospiszyl invited Jan Matoušek, a young Czech graphic designer from the Laboratory (Laboratoř) studio who has no experience of the communist regime, to create a portfolio that would, through the perspective of his independent view, summarise the story of Joska Skalník.

INDIA

Swaraj in Design: Opportunities for Conscious Learning and Sharing

Curator: Sethu Das

Designers: Design & People



Design & People is a noncommercial grouping of designers and architects that is dedicated to the communicating of social, humanitarian, ecological, and activist projects. Taking up Mahatma Gandhi's idea of *Swaraj* (in English: self-rule), Design & People also supports an open design and knowledge production. Along the lines of the "copyleft," their design products can be freely copied, disseminated, altered, and presented for noncommercial and for educational purposes. The designer Sethu Das, who founded Design & People in 2003, presents the work and philosophy of this network in his section.

HUNGARY

The Monument of the Nameless Scrum

Curator: Nikolett Eross

Artist: János Sugár

In their section, Nikolett Eröss and János Sugár explore questions pertaining to the visual representation of political upheavals in Hungary, precisely of the Revolution of 1956. They focus on a monument-concept by the '56 communist resistance fighter István Angyal (executed in 1958) that has never been realized. Angyal suggested to dedicate a big, rustic stone to the "nameless scrum." Eross and Sugár will present a realization of this monument in form of an imitation made from Styrofoam in 1:1 scale.

POLAND

The Solidarnosc Logotype

Curator: Maks Bochenek

Designers and Artists: Ewa Bałuk-Zaborowska, Jerzy Janiszewski, Grzegorz Kłaman, Gerard Lewandowski, Andrzej Pagowski, Monika Rak, Tomasz Sarnecki, Marek Sobczyk, Michał Szlaga, Henryk Tomaszewski, Ania Witkowska



© Jerzy Janiszewski; Gerard Lewandowski; Tomasz Sarnecki

The section conceived by the Wyspa Institute of Art makes reference to the Solidarnosc (Solidarity) logotype designed by Jerzy Janiszewski. Created as a result of the artist's spontaneous reaction to the conditions of Polish workers and their struggle against the communist system, the sign was to become a gift to the whole Polish society, which was uniting in the spirit of solidarity. Since the time of its initial distribution in Polish towns, thirty years have passed. The aim of this section is to show how dynamic developments in politics, economics, and law have influenced the use and reception of the Solidarnosc symbol, which changed from a symbol of a uniting society into a trademark. Apart from archive materials, posters, and their reprints, works by artists will be presented referring to these changes.

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In conjunction with *In Charge. The Role of Political Designers in Transformation*

Curators Maks Bochenek (PL); Hans D. Christ, Iris Dressler (D); Sethu Das
(India); Nikolett Eross (HU); Tomas Pospiszyl (CZ); Keiko Sei (Japan /
Thailand); Nathalie Boseul Shin (South Korea)

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DATES

Press conference Friday, September 24, 2010, 11 a.m.

Opening Friday, September 24, 2010, 7 p.m.

Curators's tour Saturday, September 25, 2010, 1 p.m.

Conference September 25. + 26., 2010

Curators's tours Wednesday, November 3, 2010, 7 p.m.
Wednesday, December 1, 2010, 7 p.m.
Sunday, January 9, 2011, 4 p.m.

INFO

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Hours Tue, Thu–Sun: 11 a.m.–6 p.m., Wed: 11 a.m.–8 p.m.