

## **‘Social Reruns’**

Furnishing each new edition with a new theme, Zgraf wishes to draw attention to the prominence of those contents that the authors find important and relevant for their position and critical role in society. This time, the theme of the international selected focus exhibition is defined by the term ‘Social Reruns’.

In the past years we have been witnessing an ever more frequent appearance of different shapes and forms of repetition, return, replication, rerun etc.

In the wake of the economic crisis, there has been talk of a return to the 1930s, and with the social crisis, growing xenophobia and nationalism as responses to the growth of immigration, we often hear of the ‘return of fascism’. Such a situation leads to ideas about leaving the regulatory mechanisms of the European Union and returning to the nation state model (as expressed in Grexit, Brexit, etc. formulas).

In the media and on TV, a never-ending broadcast of reruns of old TV serials — Hollywood production is mainly based on the repetition of once successful models in the so-called franchises, and a large part of music production leans on the reproduction and amalgamation of styles from the past decades.

A crisis is also sensed in the field which used to be called graphic and now is more and more frequently referred to as communication design. With changes in the media ambience, traditional graphic formats, like posters, were struck by an identity crisis and a need to re-examine their purpose. A turbulent period of technological and stylistic evolution of digital typography was followed by a standstill, even stagnation. Digital media design attained certain standards, but with general uniformity as a consequence. Innovation and openness to experiment seem to be substituted more and more by a quest for yet another combination of elements from the existing array of stylistic solutions.

All this leads to the question of social values, how these reflect on design, and how design discipline can contribute to their evolution. Perhaps instead of fetishizing innovation which in the end mostly manifests as a repetitive cycle of seasonal changes in trends and processes of ‘planned obsolescence’, where designers undoubtedly have a role and responsibility, attention should be paid to the development and maintenance of social infrastructure, be it public services, education or health system, public media, public space or technological and communication systems which are ever more frequently a subject of monopoly or oligopoly.

In times marked by, on the one hand, phenomena we generally refer to as globalisation, and on the other by all the economic, political, social and cultural tensions it causes, evidenced often in the rise of nationalism, different forms of fundamentalism, and border closing and wall building policies, is it even possible to build a common system of social values? Can we even face the challenges of climate changes, technological surveillance options, genetic technology and nanotechnology without such a system? What is even the role and responsibility of designers in the evolution and communication of such ideas?

Nevertheless, apart from all these negative associations, is there anything positive to be found in the expression ‘Social Reruns’? Perhaps at a moment in history cleft between a fear of the return of negative social phenomena and absorption in a seeming inevitability of the status quo, it might be possible to revive notions like solidarity, openness, public good, ideas of progress, emancipation and freedom.