Critical Daily - Critical practice in graphic design

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We graphic designers live in a media society, where the internet is not only an important place for socialisation (through social networks) and a medium for efficient communication, but also a place of learning, information exchange, and critical reflection. The internet plays a key role, for several reasons. With its help, designers can easily search for info, give comments and promote projects they like, transmitting their critical messages and even encouraging forms of protest and resistance. The internet is an effective and inexpensive method of dispersion; not only does it provide an engaging and beneficial environment, but it can also be an appropriate medium for the dissemination of critical practice.

Today, graphic designers still don't often use the internet as a medium for critical visual expression. Rather, we use it as a medium for communicating, observing, entertaining, and for our own professional promotion, exhibiting or browsing other designers' websites... Although the internet is an ideal space for commenting on daily reality (and even on our own design practice!), we still don't fully realise the opportunity it provides to express our thoughts on graphic design as a tool. But why not?

Now, more than ever, everyone has an opinion and needs to display it. Why not use graphic design, such a wonderful visual language, to display our opinion using our professional skills? After all, this could really demonstrate the strong visual potential of graphic design. For this reason, *Critical Daily* has come up with a platform where we can talk about what we think and why, and show our thoughts using a language and a skill-set that we apply every day in our professional practice. Our messages are relevant, and anyone can benefit from seeing or reading them. So why not build a new visual medium or journal developed by us?

Critical Daily would like to become a place where such commenting, reflecting and presenting of people's own critical projects can create vivid visual journalism, and at the same time, build an archive of such practices. It is not just another storage place or another trendy design, it is a collection of critical thoughts

and messages dressed in graphic design, that could inspire designers to adopt critical practice and step out of the traditional, formalistic workframe for a while. It is necessary to create some space on the internet that shows our thinking, not just our doing.

Critical Daily was developed on the back of existing archives, newspapers, blogs, and magazines — which have served as a starting point and an inspiration. However, there are many such publications that Critical Daily wants to clearly distinguish itself from. We refer to activities involving the first critical experiences in graphic design, such as the avant-garde cultural-political magazine Merz from the 1920-30s, or the countercultural magazine published by the anarchist movement Provo in the 60s, or Adbusters from the 80s. They are all sources of resistance and social provocation. But critical design practice is more a part of a comprehensive movement in which graphic designers are active participants in the network, rather than initiators.

If we move forward across history to the more recent past, we see more activity among designers themselves. A good critical magazine, Dot Dot Dot, followed by Works that Work, were founded and initiated by Peter Biľak. Some design academies have also supported critical engagement, such as Design Observer, from the School of Visual Arts in New York (editors: Michael Bierut, William Drenttel, Jessica Helfand, Julie Lasky, Nancy Levinson). In this project, the texts are dominant and images are not critical works themselves, only illustrative supplements, and it also contains more categories than just visual communication. But the project lacks the capability for the viewer to systematically browse through the content. Another interesting project is from the Faculty of Design and Art at the Free University of Bozen-Bolzano, called Visual Journalism. In this publication, designers become commentators of events and facts. The project seeks to create a kind of alternative internet media that informs the viewer of today's current topics, focusing more on infographics than on reflecting on the issues. Categories such as politics, music, environment and education are displayed next to topics like migration, consumerism, theory and infographics, thereby creating a visual hierarchy that is less than clear.

Critical Daily wants to bring information about how designers think, how they respond to the world they live in. With the tools of communication design and the internet, this has never been more doable. So let's start now; let's share, inspire, inform, learn and discover. Why? Simply because there is so much content out there that inspires critical reflection. The more topics, messages and critical projects we add and archive, the more readily it will show us, as designers, that critical practice has become a significant part of the design profession and deserves a place in graphic design history.