

## **Critical Daily - Critical practice in graphic design**

**Text by Katarína Balážiková**

We, graphic designers, live in a media society where the internet is not only an important place of socialization on social networks, communication medium, but also a place of learning, information exchange and critical reflection. The internet now plays an important role for several reasons. With help of internet, designers can easily search for information and give comments, as well as promote projects that they like. Using internet can help more easily to send their critical messages and promote even their forms of protest and resistance. Internet is an effective and inexpensive methods of distribution", so it is not only interesting and beneficial environment but can be also appropriate medium for the dissemination of critical practice.

Today we, graphic designers, still don't use much internet as a medium for our critical visual expression. We rather use it as a medium for communicating, observing, entertaining and professionally mainly for our own promotion, exhibiting or browsing other designers web sites... Even though the internet is such a great space for commenting on daily reality, we still don't consider it (and even our own design practice!) as opportunity to express our opinion. If we comment, we do it verbally, we don't use for expressing our thoughts on internet graphic design as a tool. But why not?

Today, more then ever, everyone has an opinion and needs to display it. Why not to use graphic design, such a great visual language and display on internet our opinion using our professional skills? After all this could really show what a great visual potential graphic design has. Therefore Critical Daily is coming up with a platform, where we could visually talk about what we think and why, to show our thoughts with a language and skill that we use everyday in our professional practice. Our messages are really relevant and anyone can benefit from seeing or reading them. Why not to build a new visual medium or journal developed by our self?

Critical Daily would like to become a place where such commenting, reflecting and showing our own critical projects could create vivid visual journalism, and in the same time build an archive of such practices. It is not just another storage of another great trendy designs - it is storage of critical thoughts and messages dressed in graphic design, that could inspire designers to do critical practice and step out from their traditional formalistic workframe for a while. It is necessary to create some space on internet showing our thinking not just doing.

Critical Daily was developed on basis of archives, newspapers, blogs, and magazines that have been created so far - they've been a starting point and inspiration. On the other hand there are many that Critical Daily wants to clearly distinguish from. Historically it refers back to activities that indicated first critical experiences in graphic design - such as avant-garde cultural-political magazine Merz from 20-30s, or countercultural magazine published by anarchist movement Provo in 60s or Adbusters from 80s. They all are inspiring source of resistance and social provocation, but critical design practice was more a part of a comprehensive movement where graphic designers were more active participants in the network but not directly initiators.

If we move forward in the history to the more recent past, we see more activities among designers themselves. A great critical magazine Dot Dot Dot appeared, later Works that work – Magazine of unexpected creativity, both founded and initiated by Peter Bil'ak.

Also academies supported critical engagement, such as Design Observer supported by School of Visual Arts in New York with editors Michael Bierut, William Drenttel, Jessica Helfand, Julie Lasky, Nancy Levinson. In this project texts are dominant and images are not critical works themselves, they are only illustrative supplements. It contains more categories not just visual communication, but the project lacks a bit of systematic browsing through the content.

Other interesting current project is one of the Faculty of Design and Art at the Free University of Bolzano called Visualjournalism. It is an example when

designers become the commentators of events and facts. The project seeks to create a kind of alternative internet media which informs on current topics today, but focusing more on info-graphics that reflect these issues. Categories such as politics, music, environment or education are displayed next to topics such as migration, consumerism, theory, infographics, which creates a bit of unclear visual hierarchy.

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