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Editorial

Visual communication has experienced, parallel to technological development, a number of significant changes over the past fifty years.

Although the modern age of graphic design was introduced by Johannes Gutenberg's invention of the printing press and mobile types, it became consolidated as a discipline in the late nineteenth century, at the height of the industrial era, with the mechanisation of printing (the rotary press) and the growing demand for large newspaper editions that surpassed even that of books.

Parallel to this, industrial production was reinforcing the need to distinguish between companies, giving rise to the idea of 'brand'. Logotypes, imagotypes and publicity on multiple supports—catalogues, posters and advertisements—were the strongest graphic design fields up until the early twentieth century, while the development of typography, infography and signage would subsequently become specific subfields.

In the second half of the twentieth century, graphic design was integrated into audiovisual means of communication (film and television), which demanded that typography and image worked dynamically together on the new supports.

As previously mentioned, over the last half a century the emergence of information and communication technologies (ICT) has enabled graphic design to multiply its applications and supports, and enlarge its contents. Graphic design today is able to communicate data, voices, actions and spaces; accordingly, new areas have emerged in the field, such as interface design, data visualisation, heightened reality, mapping and motion graphics.

Issue number 29 of *ELISAVA Temes de Disseny* suggests we reflect on how these new languages work, that we explore the extent to which modern means of communication are exerting an influence on the various different fields of graphic design, the degree in which

established rules continue to be valid and which mechanisms are being structured and consolidated as new theoretical principles.

The title chosen for this monographic issue defines the general field we intend to survey, using the concept of 'Visual Communication' as a general discipline and distinguishing it from graphic design as a specific professional area.

The subtitle 'The Perception of the Invisible' invites readers to think of the multiple meanings of the perceptive subject. Exposed to the numerous stimuli and communication channels conditioning contemporary life, we are continually perceiving complex global images that could in fact be fragmented and deciphered into basic information. It is up to communication professionals to provide receivers with the right codes to perceive messages simply, taking all perceptive channels into consideration.

So, today more than ever before, the new branches of graphic design are managing to broaden their field of scope to communicate the *invisible*, understood as non-visible information. Data, movements, actions, sounds, smells and virtual reality are the new ingredients of the visual message, and future graphic designers must come up with a new language in order to render them on static, dynamic and even spatial supports such as paper, screens and physical environments.

In this sense, the article by Susanna Legrenzi and Stefano Maffei introduces the discourse by suggesting a definition of *invisible* from a critical view of design, explained through projects that are not strictly linked to the world of graphic design but are connected instead to the field of communication. Taking as a starting point the idea that the invisible is a semantic category, the curators of the show entitled *(In)visible Design* staged in Milan in April 2013 have chosen twelve proposals in different formats (designs, prototypes, installations, videos) to explain the micro and macro transformations taking place in everyday life that are sometimes invisible in a saturated, fragmented and bewildered world overcrowded with signs, products, images and experiences.

In his turn, David Ruiz reflects on the way in which the digital revolution is affecting the profession of graphic designer. As the creative process doesn't essentially change, designer David Ruiz traces its history and reveals that the new tools and new media are clearly influencing our way of thinking and acting. Immediacy is one of the most relevant factors in this change, both in terms of design development and production, and in terms of the obsolescence of messages, with the risks this can entail.

The following authors, Andreu Balius, David Lorente, Marco Ferrari and Joan Zalacain, discuss specific fields of graphic design in their attempts to define and explain new mechanisms and other factors that should be taken into consideration in the design process.

Andreu Balius highlights the need to think of the value of typography in a global, multilingual world, in which technology offers new tools but is still unable to overcome linguistic and cultural barriers. This explains why future type designers must establish direct links with their social environments and design multi-script type families that enable the composition of multilingual texts characterised by aesthetic and formal unity.

David Lorente and Marco Ferrari, on the other hand, approach publication design from two opposite spheres: the design of catalogues on analogical supports (paper) and the design of digital reviews (online).

David Lorente's article introduces the concept of remediation into contemporary catalogue design, understood as a process of transformation and adaptation of audiovisual disciplines and the digital context. Examining and studying in detail actual examples, the author goes on to define the graphic and structural mechanisms that can provide typological solutions to ensure catalogues are at once visual and narrative devices, and fully communicational as both messages and as objects.

Starting from his experience as creative director at Editoriale Domus, Marco Ferrari focuses on online publication, which he describes in the framework of a free-flowing experience of reading between different media and devices. The article establishes that in this field, interactive design is becoming the most significant element after traditional publication design on paper.

New technologies are also examined by Joan Zalacain in his study of digital supports for road signage from a point of view that strives to solve the present discrepancy between the design of road signs and global navigation systems. The author explains how signs can help visualise a certain amount of 'invisible', 'mutant' information both inside and outside of vehicles, in order to improve the safety of drivers.

Last but not least, the articles by Quim Larrea and by Ferran Adell-Ariel Guersenzvaig provide two totally different points of view of the Web. Larrea begins by introducing a reflection on the Internet and its workings, and goes on to define the need to reconsider the graphic parameters and compositional laws to which future designers will have to adapt. Digital supports demand new ways of reading, and this implies, above all, new ways of designing.

Ferran Adell and Ariel Guersenzvaig also speak of the Web, yet their article focuses specifically on Big Data as a source of information and data visualisation, which they consider to be the field in which future graphic designers will have to learn to work with programmers and analysts. The authors' opinion is that all important visualisation projects must be backed up by good design, effective codes and correct data management and analysis.

The article by Lluís Torra that closes the series seeks to extend the reflection on the changes taking place in the world of visual communication, exploring the materials that can be used in the printing process today. Neuromarketing calls increasingly for the stimulation of the senses involved in our perception of the environment so that these can receive messages, so to simply speak of visual communication is reductive. Graphic designers today have at their disposition a range of supports and inks that can be combined in infinite ways and can convey invisible messages that we can, however, perceive through all our senses.

Broadly speaking, the authors open up new and inspiring horizons for future designers and today's professionals in the world of visual communication. They all indicate that design studies must be global and willing to combine with other disciplines, and that new designer tools will trigger new communication channels and enable further experimentation.