

# EX-VISIS: A PROPOSAL FOR THE CREATION OF VIDEOTHEQUE NAME TABS

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The desire to personalize the objects we use with a name tab has been a constant in history. Take the example of the important exlibristic paneuro-pean finisecular movement that coincided with our Modernism, and which gave rise to one of the most interesting library name tabs in the history of this type of activity.

In our country, at the beginning of the present century, Alexandre de Riquer, Josep Triadó and Joaquim Renart —just to mention the three most important artists that worked on the design of ex-libris—created the most beautiful examples of property name tabs for books, using English and German sources who were pioneers in this type of activity.

This first attempt at exlibristic renewal in Catalunya was mainly backed up by bibliophiles who wanted artists to create identity and property name tabs —ex-libris— for the books in their own libraries and book collections. Thus, artists and book collectors soon became collectors of ex-libris, and contributed to giving this activity a great impulse which still persists around the world today. Catalunya also participated in two other important moments in the development of modern exlibristic, during the 20's and especially in the decades from the 50's to the 70's.

Though ex-libris are not the objective of the present article, it is useful to refer to them in order to fully comprehend the meaning and scope of the proposal put forth in our title.

The latin word ex-libris means *Among the books belonging to... or the books owned by...* Materially speaking, ex-libris is a bookmark or stamp, usually small in size, that is stuck to the flyleaf or backflap of a book. It contains a drawing and a short text that personalizes, identifies and guarantees the owner of the book in case of oblivion, loss, loan or theft. Frequently, books are lent, lost, forgotten or stolen, and the ex-libris stuck to the flyleaf inside the book with the owner's stamp on it is a reminder of who the book belongs to, even though it cannot guarantee that the book will not disappear.

Nevertheless, the main characteristic of these stamps is not only that they convey the ownership of the book, but also the profile of the owner's personality, profession and affections which are mainly reflected in the drawing or in the literary or philosophical written text that usually goes with it.

Apart from being a sign of ownership and identity, ex-libris are also valuable as works of art; designs drawn and stamped using some tracing or xylographic technique.

Ex-libris are thus an obliged and important point of reference in putting forth our proposal, if we consider that creating videotheque name tabs —which is the object of our proposal— is closely related to the name tabs for books that we have just described.

In fact, we are immersed in an era where so-called visual culture has begun to play a main part in our lives, especially thanks to the advent of new communications media and the discoveries of modern technology. In general, we can say that images prevail over written language, making communication easier and more accessible as well as being a universal language.

Therefore, we are obviously moving from a written culture to a visualized culture in which images are acquiring a special predominance. A good example of this is the proliferation of videotheques, both private and public, that contain the most important graphic documentation about the artistic, scientific and leisure culture of our time, obviously passing through the personal selective filter of the owner in each case.

The visual culture phenomenon is important not only because it is in itself a new type of communication —through images— but also because it can determine human behaviour in the sense that images are driving forces, the same as ideas. We will not undertake a discussion about this here, though we could focus our attention on it at some other time.

The purpose of our proposal is therefore, to emphasize the qualitative change in the method used for transmitting culture, and create images that will identify it. Specifically, to work on the design of videotheque name tabs, whether personal or corporative, which would be similar and parallel to ex-libris, that is, name tabs for books and libraries.

Today almost everyone owns a video and has a shelf full of tapes —just like books— which contain a selection of graphic documents that have been considered interesting for whatever reason. Some videotheques contain very interesting and well organized material. Why not personalize them with an identity mark that will prove its ownership at the same time?

It is not our aim here to assert our claim over the meaning of private property in reference to culture, but we do want to point out something that is already happening: videotapes are lent, lost or simply disappear... often not returning to their place of origin. Why not tag them with a personalizing mark?

We dare to suggest that these new videotheque name tabs be called EX-VISIS, which is parallel to the word ex-libris used to denominate name tabs for books or collections of books. It is made up from the latin ablative preposition EX and the plural neutral ablative participle VISIS —that we could consider substantivated—; thus, the word EX-VISIS would come to mean *Among the images belonging to... or even better— with a certain degree of license —the videotapes owned by...*

As in the case of ex-libris the design of these name tabs could include two elements: the text containing the word EX-VISIS and the name and surnames of the owner of the videotheque, and the graphic or iconic component alluding to aspects related to the owner's personality, making it a sort of psychological profile that will make these name tabs as personal as possible.

The incorporation of other elements could also be taken into account such as the number of the tape or the shelf, or sentences referring to the personality of the owner. A code could also be made up for different fields of interest or types of film, but this would be part of another study which is not our objective in the present article. What we claim here is the creation of these singular name tabs, not how they should be; this latter aspect would probably emerge after putting the idea into practice.

Why have we introduced the latin word EX-VISIS instead of any other? The answer is quite clear. On the one hand, it is a way of connecting with our traditional western greek and latin roots, languages from which our own language and culture stem. Also, since the word VIDEO has already been accepted, it would seem logical to use a word derived from it: VISIS.

On the other hand, we also connect with the important modern exlibristic movement which took place between the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, in the midst of our Modernism and which, despite renewal, was able to maintain the use of terminology that was already used in Europe at the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. We must also point out that in the field of exlibristic, similar expressions to the one we propose for videotheques were already used; for example, Ex-musicis, exeroticis, etc. Nevertheless, we wish to underline that the word EX-VISIS is merely a proposal.

Obviously, the creation of these name tabs does not avoid forgetting, losing or loaning videotapes, but it may help to identify and personalize them, turning them into a visual reminder of who the tapes belong to and thus, into a possible means of persuasion so that they be returned to their owner.

Using the same model, our proposal could also be used for the records in our private record collection. In this case, and following the initial proposition, the best word would be EX-AUDITIS. This word would be made up from the plural neutral ablative AUDITIS, derived from the verb *audio* and preceded by the ablative latin preposition EX, indicating where it belongs to. Its translation would be *Amongst the sounds belonging to... or even better... the records owned by...*

Before concluding this article we would like to mention «icons» thus named by computer specialists —which, in the field of computer science,

usually appear as graphic symbols or marks of identification at the beginning of the different programmes produced by a certain company.

As we have already mentioned, these marks are mainly identity signs, useful for catalogue and registration purposes; in the case of books they would be the equivalent of the publishing sign or the symbol of a given collection, but without the ownership or entitling characteristic of ex-libris. We will refer to these singular signs —«icons»— on some other occasion.

Almost 100 years after the exlibris renewal movement which took place in the midst of our own Modernist movement, we put forth the present proposal on Ex-visis hoping that artist and designers will take it into account considering this new factor that has arisen and the gap which must be filled: videotheque name tabs.