Off the Grid

Belgian Graphic Design
from the 1960s and 1970s
as Seen by Sara De Bondt

Introduction

The title of this exhibition refers to the fact that Belgium's graphic design history remains largely uncharted. Whereas numerous books have been written on Swiss, Dutch or British graphic design, there is, to date, only a handful of published histories of graphic design in this country. Interestingly, as I discovered, most of the books on graphic design history in other countries are written by graphic designers themselves. Specialised courses in design history and design criticism have only started to appear in the last few years.

Off the Grid offers a non-systematic survey of graphic design in Belgium, roughly from after the World Expo in Brussels in 1958 to the advent of the personal computer in the early 1980s. Design Museum Gent has previously presented exhibitions on the subject, including *In koeien van letters: 50 jaar grafische vormgeving in Vlaanderen* (In Capital Letters: 50 years of graphic design in Flanders).
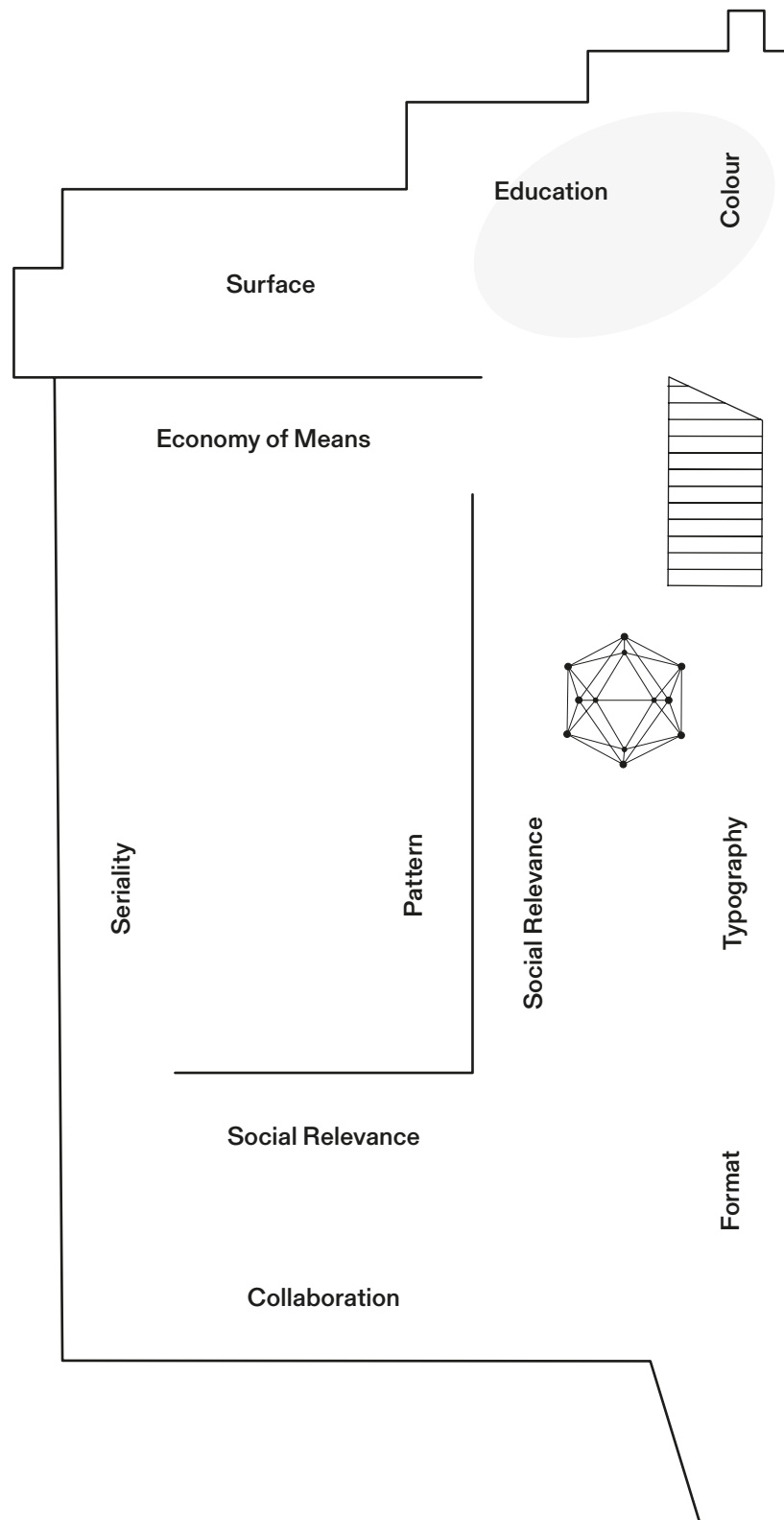
That was, however, more than twenty years ago, in 1998, when I was studying graphic design at Sint Lucas in Brussels. After graduating, I moved to The Netherlands to continue my studies. Then I went to work in the United Kingdom as a graphic designer, first employed and then for myself.

This exhibition is certainly not conceived as a celebration of a Belgian 'national style'. In fact, when I returned to Belgium four years ago and started my doctoral research, of which this exhibition is an output, I was happy to discover how international 'Belgian' graphic design was and is. Not only did Jeanine Behaeghel, Rob Buytaert and Jean-Jacques Stiefenhofer study abroad, but many successful designers based in Belgium were immigrants: the German Manfred Hürrig, the Lebanese Sami Alouf, the Swiss Léo Marfurt, and the French Jacques Richez and André Pasture. The Brussels-based Hungarian Charles Rohonyi, who collaborated with his partner Alice Dér, is the author of several articles on Belgian graphic design, and in 1971 he celebrated the absence of a Belgian style:

'Belgium is no doubt the one European country with the highest number of foreigners per square mile. This "European" situation has equally made Belgium a country "without graphic frontiers". There is nothing like a typically Belgian style.'

Jean-Jacques Stiefenhofer at the ICSID conference in Kyoto, 1973

Education

Colour

Surface

Economy of Means

Seriality

Pattern

Social Relevance

Typography

Social Relevance

Format

Collaboration

Unfortunately, Jeanine Behaeghel and Sophie Alouf are among the few female designers whose work is shown here, although the exhibition honours the invaluable yet less visible contributions to the field by such pioneers as Josine des Cressonnières, Liliane-Emma Staal and Jenny Van Driessche. At the time, women often worked in the background, supporting their male partners, uncredited and unremunerated. Many turned to illustration, which was less deadline-dependent, less well paid, and considered (absurdly) inferior to graphic design.

As an independent female graphic designer and a teacher, I am heartened by the fact that the position of women in the profession has improved — though graphic design, like so many other areas, is far from having rid itself of sexism.

My own practice has been the viewfinder through which the objects on display have been selected, organised by keywords that I feel are relevant to my work: typography, collaboration, social relevance, seriality, surface, colour, economy of means, pattern, format, and education. Chaptering this history in personal terms was a way for me to approach this material as a practitioner — one, moreover, who has spent most of her career outside of Belgium — and to suggest that history, especially lacunary histories like this one, is unfinished business, open to fruitful debate and reinterpretation.

Sara De Bondt

Jeanine Behaeghel
undated

→
Jeanine Behaeghel
Korrekelder poster, 1965

Typography

'Signs and symbols rule the world, not words or laws.'
– attributed to Confucius, a favourite quote of designer
and artist Paul Ibou

Typography is 'the articulation of language by mechanical means', and one of the main elements of graphic design. There is a genuine pleasure in the act of typesetting a text: it sits somewhere between reading and playing a musical score and involves a certain degree of craft.

As with any craft, there are many rules and conventions. It is good to know them but also to break them when it feels appropriate. This is why typesetting by non-designers can be so beautiful, unaware of do's and don'ts, allowing type to move freely on a page.

Nevertheless, book designer Louis van den Eede is quick to remind us: 'That there are no obligations in typography does not mean that everything is allowed.' Hence the importance of typography manuals, such as Fernand Baudin's *De Drukletter: Vorm, Vervaardiging, Indeling, Toepassing* (The Typeface: Form, Production, Layout, Application, 1965), one of many books he wrote on the subject, several translated into other languages. Baudin, who called himself a '*typographiste*' declared that: 'Punctuation can bring a page to life.'

Technology influences how typography performs: a poster made with individual rub-down letters, such as **Jeanine Behaeghel**'s work for the experimental Bruges theatre Korrekelder, which she cofounded, looks very different from election posters pressed onto a page with large wood type. In other cases, it is the context that seems to bring certain typographies to life. The typefaces by **Michel Waxmann**, one of the few typeface designers active in Belgium in the 1960s and 1970s, such as Surprise, Michel, and Bronx, have come to be associated with pop music because they have appeared on so many disco record sleeves.

Based on the work of René Magritte, Hergé and Marcel Broodthaers, you could argue that to interrogate the relationship between word and image is typically Belgian. In Belgian art schools, graphic designers and illustrators begin their studies together, only to part ways in subsequent years. This is very different from the practice in the foreign institutions where I have taught, where word and image makers follow different trajectories from the start and the disciplines remain much more separate.

Designer **Boudewijn Delaere** grants the word an extraordinary visual power when he uses Constant Permeke's name instead of a reproduction of one of the artist's paintings. Another compelling example of how word and influence each other is **Julian Key**'s poster 'Vroom', where the image has already left the page. All that remains is its sound, *vroom*, a visual echo.
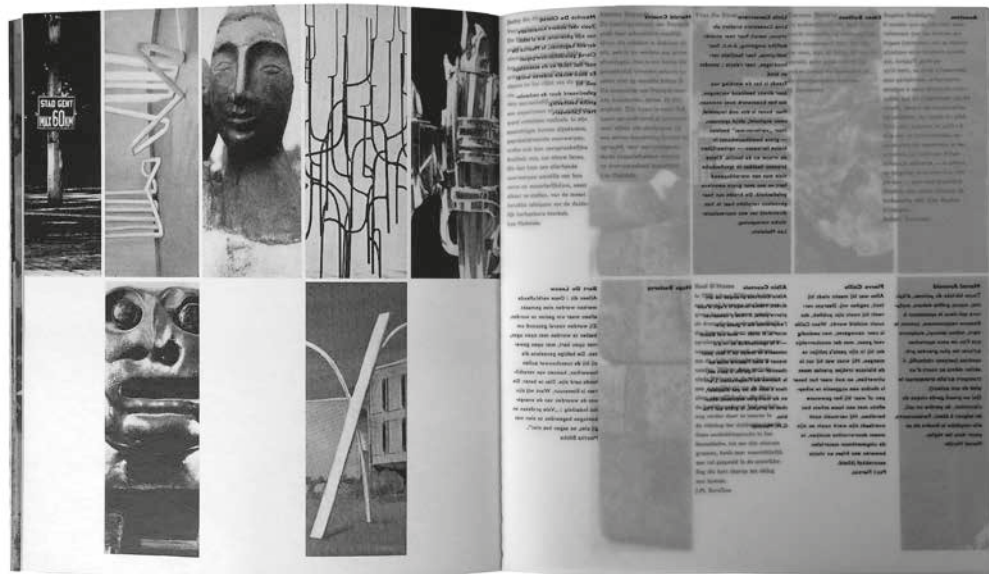
The proportions of a page determine how text and images can be laid out. Much ink has already been spilt on this subject. German designer Jan Tschichold, for example, is famous for his opprobrium of deviant formats: 'Books have to be handy. Books wider than the 3:4 (quarto) ratio, especially square ones, are ugly and impractical.'

Fortunately, this did not stop **Herman Lampaert** when designing the striking *Beelden in het Zuidpark* (Sculptures in the Zuidpark, 1969). He gave the book a landscape format, which meant using a multiple-column grid to avoid long line lengths that are hard to read. And it certainly didn't inhibit **Paul Ibou**, one of the most inventive designers of die cutting and folding techniques — an obsession dating back to his childhood, when he would play with paper shreds on the shop floor of his father's printing business.
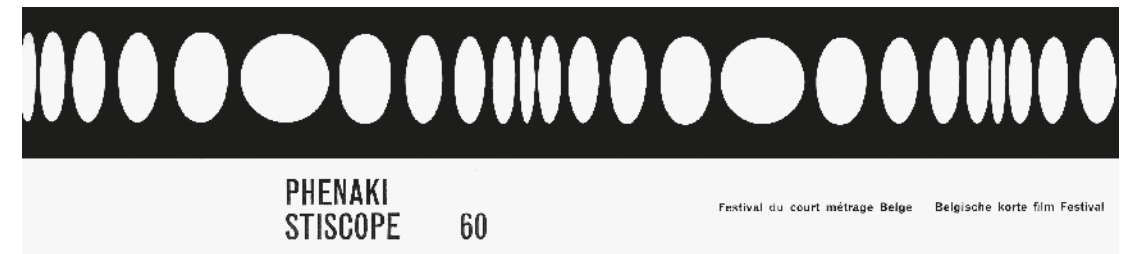
When **Corneille Hannoset** designed a narrow poster for a Belgian short-film festival in 1960, he was forced to use a condensed typeface and to split the long word 'Phenakistiscope', which transformed it into a logotype. Another striking example of Hannoset's format ingenuity is his invitation for the sculptor Carlo Carlotti (1966), where some letters of the name are printed on the back of the paper, but its transparency allows you to read it all from the front. The black-and-white printing and the thin paper would have made it very cheap to print, but Hannoset's careful paper choice and clever consideration of how the invitation would be held turned it into something precious instead.

It is because invitations and ephemera — especially those that transgress conventional formats — are often fragile, (mis)handled and thrown away that so few have survived in archives. Posters, on the other hand, are more stable and more 'artistic', which ensures their survival through photography and online databases. This is probably why the few books on Belgian graphic design focus on poster design. A good example is the enormously long fold-out flyer, depicting children standing on each other's shoulders, which **Design-Team**'s **Luk Mestdagh** and **Rudi Verhelst** produced for *Jaar van het Kind,* a musical by the Ministry of Dutch Culture (1979): the poster for the event is kept in several institutional archives, but the much bolder flyer is tucked away in a lone personal archive.

↖
Herman Lampaert
Beelden in het Zuidpark
book, 1969

←
Paul Ibou
Selected flyers
1969, 1967 & 1961

↑
Corneille Hannoset
Phenakistiscope poster
1960
Courtesy Ceuleers
& Van de Velde

↗
Corneille Hannoset
Carlotti invite, 1966

Collaboration

Much of graphic design's success depends on the people working together — designers, printers and, not least, clients — and the success of the collaboration can make or break a project. For many graphic designers, good design depends on good conversations, which allow their practice to remain open to new ideas and keep evolving.

In 1971, Jacques Richez placed an advertisement in *Bulletin social des Industriels* that read:

'*Graphiste sér. ch. clients ayant du talent.*'
(Serious graphic designer seeks talented clients.)

It is easy to get locked into a hierarchical relationship with the client, but designers often find inventive ways to destabilise their 'service provider' status. Boudewijn Delaere told me, for example, that he would only ever show one design to a client, because 'a doctor doesn't give you several diagnoses either'.

Multi-Art (1969-1972), the publishing company, gallery space and the first art bookshop in Antwerp, was founded by Liliane-Emma Staal and Paul Ibou precisely to subvert the traditional economic designer-client model. They invited artists to collaborate on small artists' editions — paper objects with low print runs and sold at affordable prices.

Multi-Art Gallery, 1972
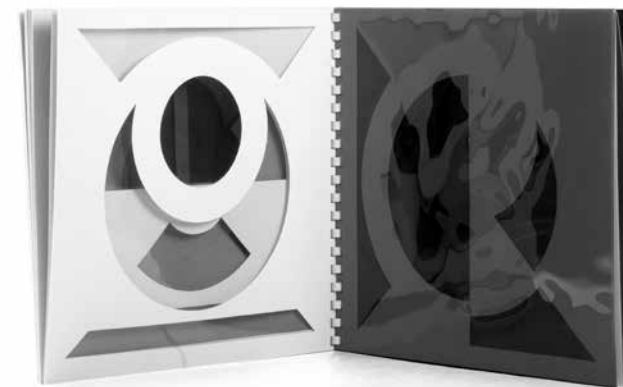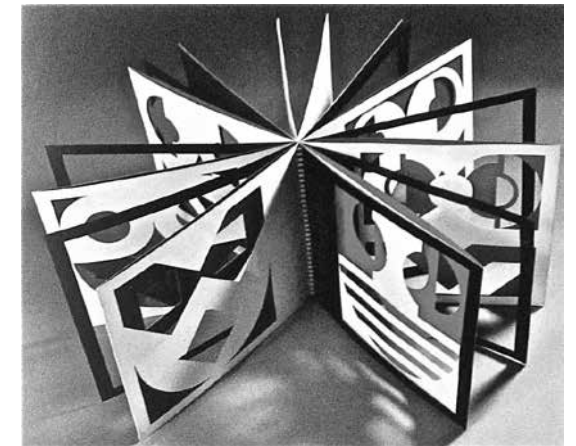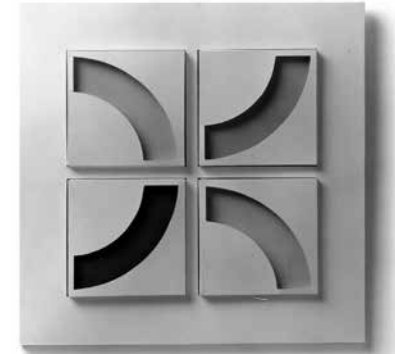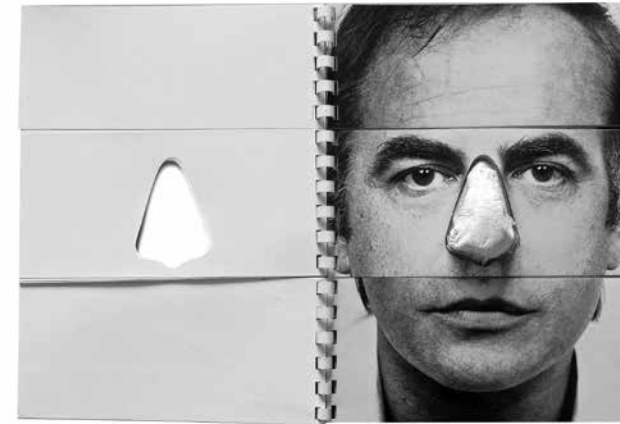
Clockwise from top left:
Neuzen/neuzen, Albert Szukalski, Multi-Art Press, 1971
Untitled, Jef Verheyen, Multi-Art Press, 1971
12 Owl Variations, Paul Ibou, Multi-Art Press, 1970
Moon Project, Cesar Bailleux, Multi-Art Press, 1971
Metamorphosis, Paul Ibou, Monas, 1968
*Paper Events*, Marinus Boezem, Multi-Art Press, 1970

Plus-Kern, 'a centre for constructivist design', founded in Ghent in 1969 by Yves de Smet and Jenny Van Driessche, was another attempt at blurring the lines between fields. Through their magazine *Plus-Nieuws* (18 issues between 1969 and 1972) and exhibitions at Plus-Kern such as 'Art by Designers / Design by Artists' (1970), they tried, as De Smet put it, to get rid of 'the rigid definitions of graphic, pictorial and plastic art, the boundaries imposed on visual and auditive art forms, the distinction made between construction and architecture, [and] the gulfs preserved between the art forms, and the media.'
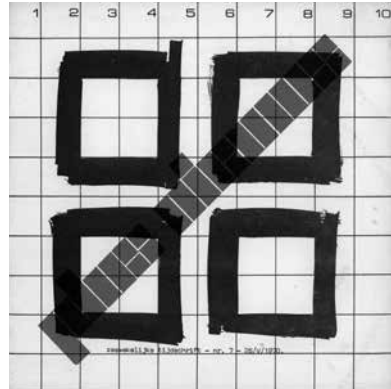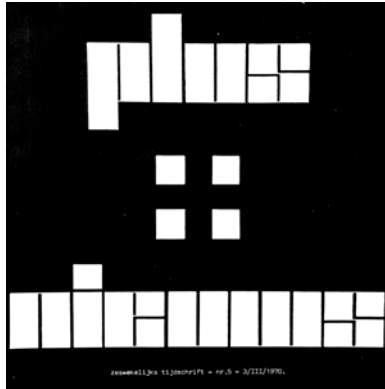
While the ingenuously crafted ***Motion in Vision/Vision in Motion*** catalogue (1959) showed artists how to control the design of their own pages — nine years before Seth Siegelaub's famous Xerox book — it is worth remembering that graphic designers often struggle to get their voices heard. When **Marcel Broodthaers** announced that he too wanted to sell something and become successful, he resorted to the medium of graphic design and collaborated with his friend, typographer **Corneille Hannoset**, on an invitation that was overprinted onto existing magazine pages. This piece, now sought-after by museums and collectors, is often mistakenly attributed to Broodthaers, while Hannoset's name is clearly printed on it. Indeed, his influence on Broodthaers' typographic work is obvious, if we can only accept the mutual nature of their collaboration.

As early as 1959, Mark F. Severin wrote: 'In Belgium, an old belief is dying hard — that an artist who goes in for commercial or graphic art is going down the scale of *Le grand art*. Good graphic artists do not get in Belgium the credit they would in other countries.'
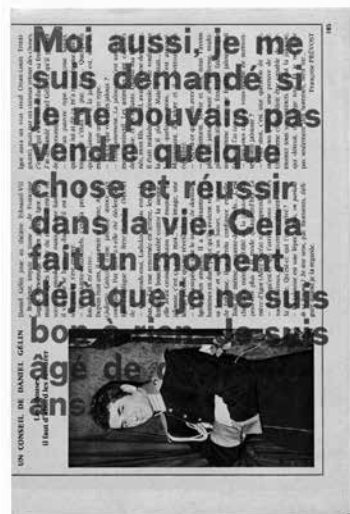
↖
Plus-Nieuws, no. 7, 1970
Plus-Nieuws, no. 5, 1970

↑
*Motion in Vision/
Vision in Motion*, 1959

←
Marcel Broodthaers &
Corneille Hannoset
*Moi aussi, je me suis demandé
si je ne pouvais pas vendre
quelque chose et réussir dans
la vie...* invitation, 1964

Social Relevance

Graphic design plays a significant, albeit often unsung role in daily life. It surrounds all of us all the time. With this omnipresence comes responsibility: being selective about working for large corporations or considerate of print's environmental impact are just a few examples of how designers deal with urgent issues today.

In the 1960s and 1970s, Belgium had an association of graphic designers, whose mission was to improve the working conditions of its members. The bilingual Chambre Belge des Graphistes / Belgische Kamer van Grafische Ontwerpers also helped to distribute and promote its members' work, provided model contracts, served as a forum for discussions on pricing and advised the Ministry of Education. It even raised funds by selling its members' work in support of such as causes as the Chilean resistance or political prisoners in Vietnam.
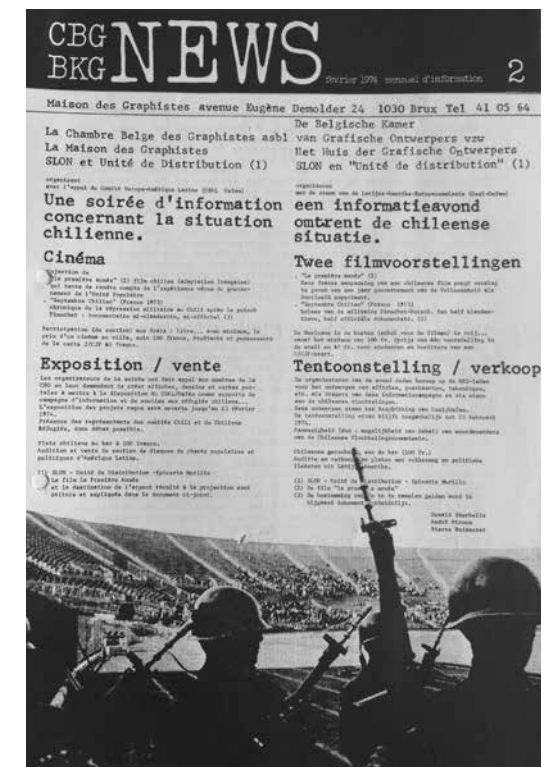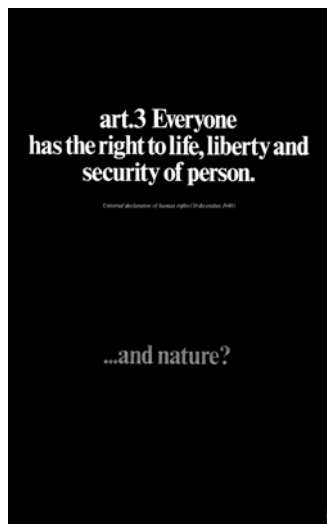

CBG / BKG NEWS,
newsletter, 1974

The Chambre's motto was: 'BKG is mijn naam, want wij zijn met velen.' ('CBG is my name, because we are many.') Colette Denaeyer, Francine De Boeck, Charles Rohonyi, **Michel Olyff**, André Piroux, Manfred Hürrig, Luk Mestdagh and many others were active members, and later took part in events at the Maison Belge des graphistes and partied at its Recto Verso Club. Unfortunately, due to financial problems and despite several attempts to revive it, it was not able to sustain itself and folded definitively in 1979. To date, there is no comparable organisation for graphic designers in Belgium.

The CBG was not unanimous on the social role of graphic design. On the one hand, there were members like **Jaques Richez**, one of the few internationally known Belgian graphic designers at the time. At the start of his career, he encouraged his peers to work for the market, regardless of social implications. In 1966, for example, he designed a poster for an exhibition of Belgian tapestries and weapons. In his manual *L'art graphique appliqué à la Publicité*, published the same year, he made his point abundantly clear:

'It's important that, when the time comes, true creators are ready to fully fulfil their mission in the distribution mechanism and in commercial expansion.'

On the other hand there was, for example, **Boudewijn Delaere**, who saw graphic design as a powerful tool for raising the visibility of social issues. An early advocate of environmental awareness, he submitted in 1971 his powerful '*... and nature*?' poster to a competition. Despite being the jury's first choice, the prize money was given to a runner-up, as Delaere's imageless design was deemed too boring. Later on, one of Delaere's clients, design biennial INTERIEUR, recognised the quality of his design and had the poster printed in three languages to be hung all over the fair's 1972 edition.

art.3 Everyone
has the right to life, liberty and
security of person.

...and nature?

Seriality

Graphic design is usually serial, as it works primarily with multiple copies of printed objects, especially when clients impose their own 'house style'.

Ironically, lack of time sometimes led organisations to forego a strict graphic identity. **Corneille Hannoset**, who designed the invitations for screenings of the film club L'Écran du Séminaire des Arts, recalls working with the director Jacques Ledoux: 'The films always arrived late, if they arrived at all, which meant there was very little time left to design the invitations. I was always on hand and would often get a call in the middle of the night. We would go to a cafe and sort out the design on a napkin.' Because of — or thanks to — such haste, each design was different and unique.
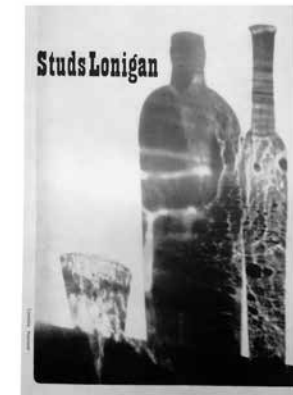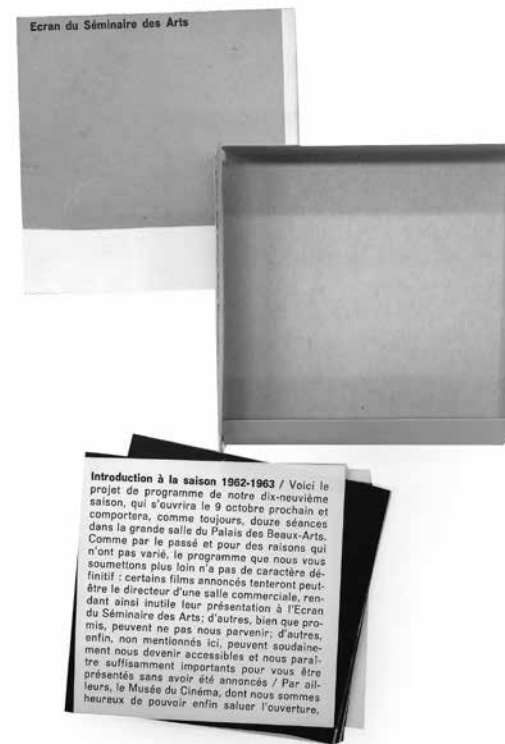
When *L'Écran* evolved into a proper institution, the *Musée du Cinéma*, in 1962, improvisation gave way to a fixed format, which Hannoset applied to the museum's film programme for the next thirty years. The format was always same, a '*tête-bêche*', meaning it could be hung on the wall with the calendar visible even when a page was flipped over. Only the colours and printing methods changed over time.

Paul Ibou and Liliane-Emma Staal followed a similar line of reasoning when they were commissioned in 1976 to streamline the communication of the International Cultural Centre (ICC) in Antwerp. For each of the ICC's distinct set of activities, they produced a colour-code and a symbol: blue hexagon for fine art, green triangle for architecture, orange circle for photography, etc. This system was also used for the pre-printed folders. Thanks to this way of working, the content could be printed cheaply, in-house and at the last minute, without affecting the overall graphic scheme. The posters they designed for the ICC — each one slightly different — followed a similar logic, always combining the same scant elements: blue background and black left-ranging sans serif lettering divided by thin lines.
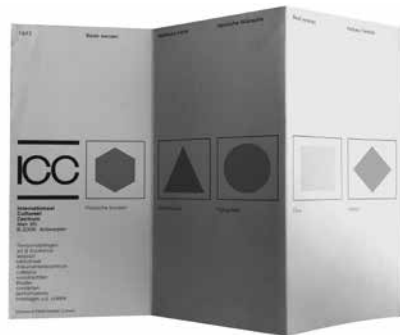
The biggest print runs are usually made for advertising campaigns. At a time when reproducing photographs was expensive, many poster designers resorted to line drawings to sell their products — see, for example, the often humorous work by **Julian Key**, Léo Marfurt, Charles Rohonyi and Lucien De Roeck. A less well-known poster designer is **Frans De Jonck**, who soon turned his back on his employer, Denkens Advertising & Design, and started producing unique designs for non-corporate clients such as the Gentse Feesten (1975, 1978, 1980).

Pattern

Patterns and rasters, arguably, are the foundation of graphic design. Reproductions consist of either dot-screen patterns of ink on paper or rows of pixels on screens. **Sophie Alouf** was clearly aware of this when she used an enlarged grid pattern for the 'Actualité des arts' poster that she made for the Woluwe Shopping Center (1971). Screen-printed in only two colours, the pattern creates a gradient effect, and the overprinted blue and green create a third colour, black.

Patterns also allow for a certain abstraction in design. **Jeanine Behaeghel**'s logo for the experimental theatre venue Korrekelder in Bruges (1961), used on all printed matter and as a sign on the building itself, resembles a fish — sometimes filled in with a fishnet pattern — alludes to the Korre art collective (founded by **Albert Setola** and René Vanhoutryve), which gave its name to the theatre and is an old word for fishing net in Dutch.


↖
Corneille Hannoset
Musée du Cinéma
programme, 1962

←
Paul Ibou
ICC brochure, 1976

↑
Jeanine Behaeghel
Korrekelder logo, 1961

→
Sophie Alouf
Actualité des arts poster, 1971

Boudewijn Delaere's long career as a graphic designer also began with patterns. He trained as a pattern designer in Kortrijk, a city known for its textile production. This background came in handy when he participated in a design competition for Innovation, one of Belgium's biggest department stores at the time. Instead of just designing a logo, as described in the assignment, he developed a pattern that was printed on wrapping paper, carrier bags and window displays. The brand name *inno* was printed unusually small, but the visual identity was instantly recognisable and the pattern continued to be used for more than thirty years.
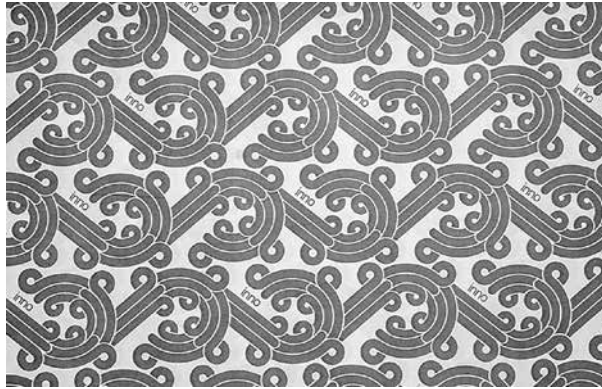

There is something obsessive about patterns; the repetition and the lack of figurative elements evoke an image of infinity. **Corneille Hannoset** seems to have succumbed to their allure: equipped with nothing but a rucksack and a camera, he travelled the world to photograph patterns in situ. With his photos, he put together a pattern archive, composed of folders, similar to an image database on a computer. He would draw on this image bank for design elements throughout his career.

One of these images features on the poster for *Off the Grid*, and I also used it for the design of the carpet in the Education section of this exhibition, inspired by a carpet that Hannoset designed in 1949.

The Antwerp gallery De Zwarte Panter stayed closer to home, choosing to bring its print production in-house. From 1971, **Panter Pers** (Panther Press) produced a dazzling array of artists' editions and gallery posters, frequently designed by **Herbert Binneweg** and printed on-site by Roger Vandaele.

↖
Boudewijn Delaere
Innovation wrapping paper
1969

→
Corneille Hannoset
pattern library (selection)
undated
Archives et Musée de
la Littérature, Brussel
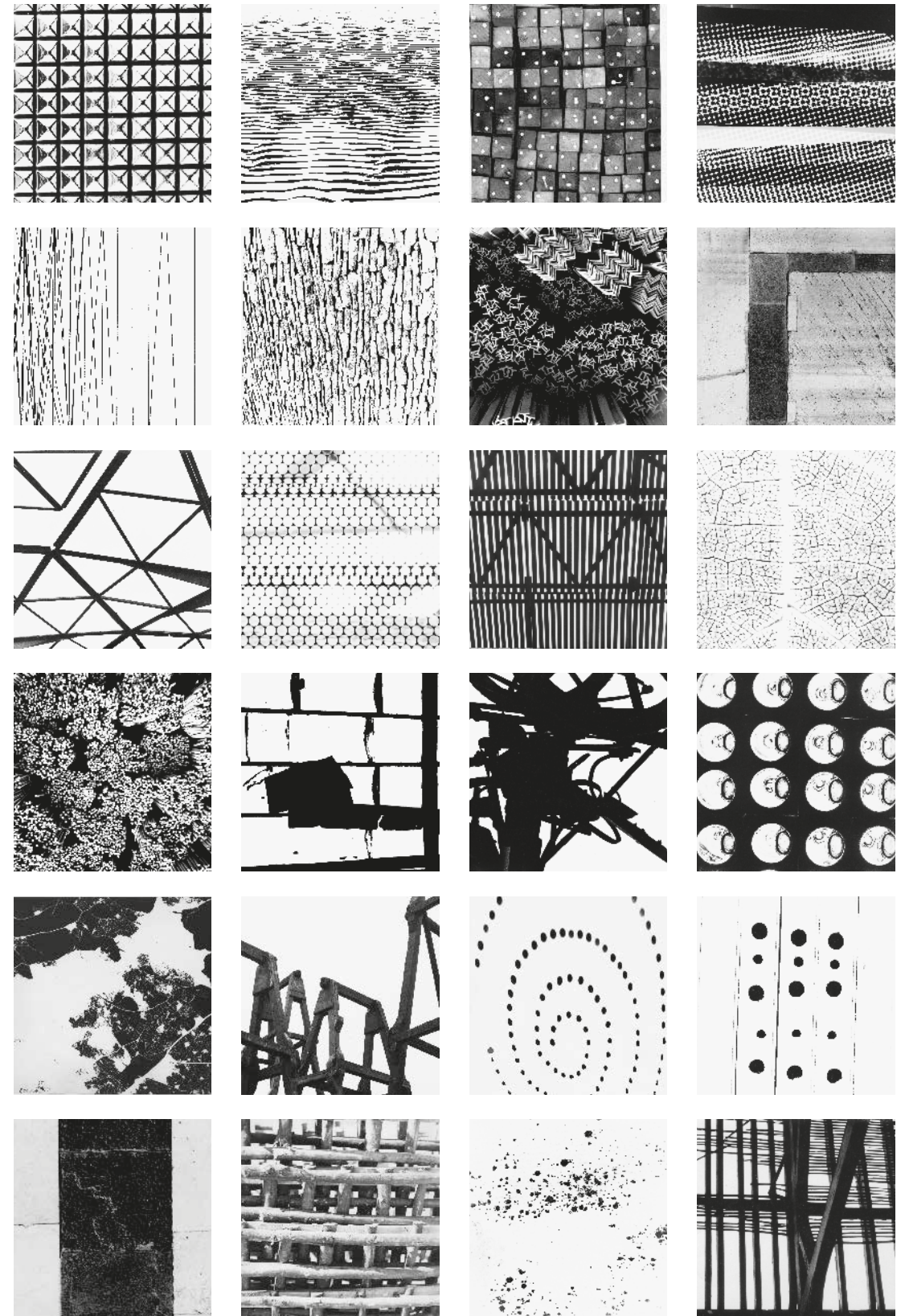
Economy of Means

Economy of means refers to making more with less. It is not so much a style as an approach, one with both economic and ecological consequences. British designer **Michael Marriott**, who designed the furniture for this exhibition, is a good example of economy of means: his work is always produced with the bare minimum of materials, and he often repurposes industrially made objects, like a bucket that becomes a lampshade, or cable ties that hold a stool together.

For modernism, which influenced many of the works on display here, 'economy of means' was almost a dogma. Today, we see how modernist orthodoxy reinforced a totalitarian and exclusionary vision, but we should not forget how strongly modernism believed in design's capacity to improve the world. Journalist Karel N. Elno, one of modernism's most avid champions in Belgium, tried to enthuse the general public about 'good, honest, socially and morally responsible, modern design.'
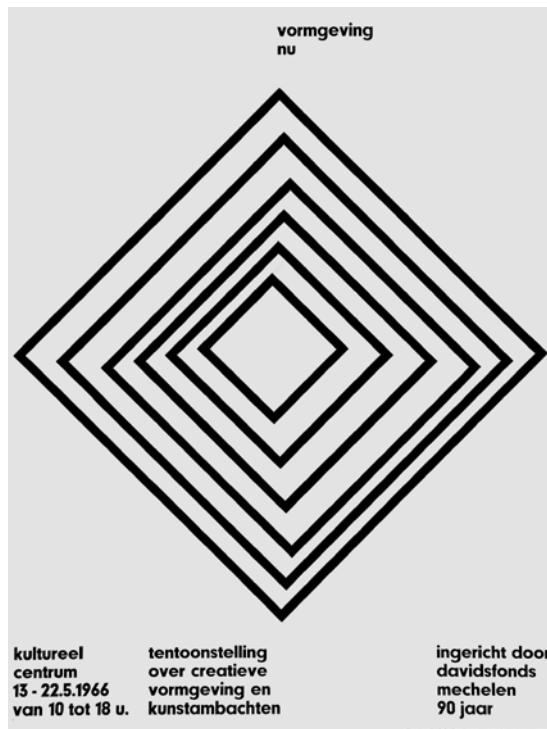
Modernism sought to promote moral responsibility but also advocated a greater sensitivity to, and democratisation of, beauty. **Jean-Jacques Stiefenhofer**, who trained at the Hochschule für Gestaltung in Ulm, the high temple of modernism, professed a genuine affection for modernist principles:

'I'm in love with rational organisation. It's why I love the Swedes I know so well, they know what it means to plan and organise (...). They also take care of the visual aspect of things, something our friendly Flemish see as materialism of lesser value.'

Stiefenhofer was one of the main importers of Ulm principles in Belgium. In 1967, he founded the Antwerp Product Design course, inviting many ex-Ulm staff to teach. Despite his pioneering work, he had already predicted the dilemma of designers such as myself, who feel close to certain tenets of modernism while recognising its complicity with capitalism:

'Design's ideal goal is the research of certain problems in their social environment. Since functionalism is now destroyed by distribution technology and the optimisation of marketing strategies, we are now confronted more with the gaping crater between technocratic rendition and human pleasure. (...) A designer should contribute constructively to a society where any member can be creative and act responsibly.'

In other words, modernist rationality was not only about visual organisation, but also about sharing viewing pleasure and about how you connect people, contexts and things.

A fine example is **Rob Buytaert**'s typographic poster for the open-air exhibition *Beelden in de Ruimte* (1964), which brought together four art schools from Flanders, Brussels and the Netherlands. Buytaert gave the poster a diamond shape, so that it could be hung to create a variable composition.

↖
Michael Marriott
Bucket Lamp
1996

←
Jean-Jacques Stiefenhofer
Vormgeving nu poster
1966

→
Rob Buytaert
Beelden in de ruimte poster
1964

Surface

In his 2007 essay 'The Surface of Design', the French philosopher Jacques Rancière compares poets and engineers, saying they both work with surface, 'a surface of communication where words and images slide into one another.'

This definition could apply to graphic designers: they not only specialise in communication, but also work in two dimensions. Or does it just seem that way? If you take a closer look, you realise that designers play with volume, relief and texture. Books are three-dimensional, paper has grain, and various techniques (embossing and letterpress, to name only two) give a distinctly spatial dimension to the graphic designer's work.

The designer and artist — or 'multi-artist', as he prefers to call himself — **Paul Ibou** has developed a practice that has transformed the surface of design into a complex, quasi-sculptural space. Together with Liliane-Emma Staal, Ibou developed the visual identity of Middelheim Biennial (1965-1971), a large-scale, open-air art exhibition in Antwerp's famous sculpture park. The austere logo is a lowercase 'b', to which they applied a different effect for each edition of the Biennial, referencing Hélène van Coppenolle's 1959 Middelheim Biennial poster design by using abstracted elements from nature. As part of the Biennial's signage, the logo was rendered into over three-metre high sculptures, installed in different locations across the city.

↑
Hélène van Coppenolle
Middelheim Biennial poster
1959

←
Paul Ibou
Middelheim Biennial
wayfinding, 1981

→
Paul Ibou
Royal Ballet of Flanders
logo, 1975

Among the duo's most daring translations from two to three dimensions is the large icosahedron (twenty-sided object) at the entrance to this exhibition — a remake of the form Ibou and Staal used to produce the logo for the Royal Ballet of Flanders (1975). In the original icosahedron, two dancers performed a series of Laban dance movements, and a stylised version of a photograph taken during the performance became the Royal Ballet's logo.

Whereas Ibou and Staal oscillated between design and sculpture, designers such as **Rob Buytaert** and **Luc Van Malderen** mined the space between design and architecture. *Bouwen in België 1945-1970* (Building in Belgium 1945-1970), a travelling exhibition curated by the architecture critic Geert Bekaert, was the first critical overview of post-war architecture in Belgium. Buytaert's ingeniously simple design for the poster and catalogue feature a cube with the colours of the Belgian flag.

For Van Malderen, architecture was the guiding thread of his entire oeuvre. He was obsessed with all types of built structures and drew them constantly. 'I am a manufacturer of objects,' he said, 'that represent architecture through seemingly oblique projections, elementary schemata, random (and sometimes industrial) configurations, naïve volumes.' Unlike painters, he added, graphic designers have the potential to redeem modern architecture, 'by growing flowers in a besieged, heavily fortified city.'
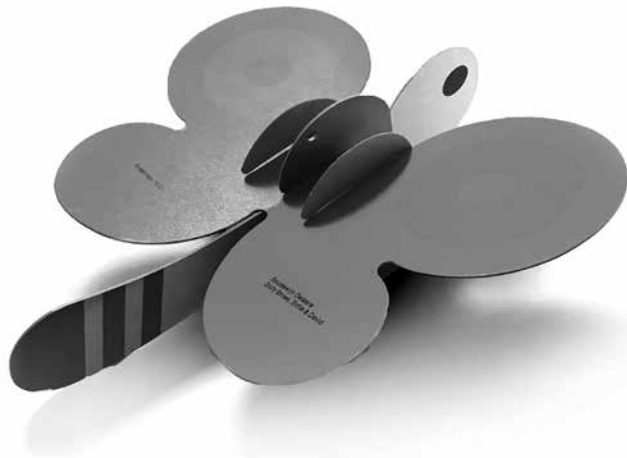
↖
Boudewijn Delaere
New year's greeting
1970

→
Herman Lampaert
Facetten van de Jonge
Vlaamse Kunst poster, 1969

FACETTEN
VAN DE
JONGE
VLAAMSE
KUNST

SINT-PIETERSABDIJ
TE GENT
SINT-PIETERSPLEIN 10
VAN 13 JUNI TOT
14 SEPTEMBER 1969
DAGELIJKS TOEGANKELIJK
VAN 14 TOT 18 U
BOVENDIEN, OP ZON-
EN FEESTDAGEN
VAN 10 U 30 – 12 U 30

Colour

Colour can be a contentious subject among designers, for whom too much colour is quickly perceived as kitsch. Diehard typographers rarely use anything beyond black or red for text. When, in the 1960s, the Dutch designer Wim Crouwel described the British designer Ken Briggs as 'the colourist', Briggs was embarrassed — excessive use of colour was not something to brag about.

At the time, there were also financial reasons for not printing in colour, because it was expensive. **Gilles Fiszman** stands out for turning this technical limitation to his advantage. His poster for an exhibition of Belgian craftmanship in Poland (1974) uses two colours to create a third: by overprinting orange on black, he creates a deeper black for the drawings on the poster.

Colour may have also been shunned for its suggestion of a superfluous 'feminine' addition to the rigours of modernism's black and white. It is telling that **Sophie Alouf** — one of the few women to gain prominence as a graphic designer in Belgium during this period — cites two other women as inspirations for her colourful collage work:

'I had a very colourful style — clients who wanted colour came to us. I was much less into black and white than other designers and used colour abundantly in my work. Artists like Sonia Delaunay and Sophie Taeuber, who embrace shapes and colours, have undoubtedly influenced me.'

Another influence on Alouf was her mother, Lou Bertot, who taught at La Cambre art school in Brussels and was well-known for her collages. With a pair of scissors, Alouf made designs for posters, carpets, signposting, packaging, sculptures, and paintings, while her partner, Sami Alouf, handled client meetings and typesetting.

Some colour combinations evoke nationalist connotations in Belgium. Yellow and black — the colours of the Flemish flag — are particularly loaded. To circumvent this thorny issue, **Herman Lampaert** took the unusual step of using the full colour spectrum for his exhibition poster *Facetten van de Jonge Vlaamse Kunst* (Facets of Young Flemish Art, 1969).

In the context of Belgian colonialism, too, colour quickly gained a political charge. At first glance, one could admire **Corneille Hannoset**'s exhibition poster *Art africain / Art moderne* (1971) for its bold use of colour. But when one knows that Hannoset designed the signage and printed matter for the controversial Congo pavilion at the 1958 World Expo in Brussels, one can't help but conclude that, once again, colour is equated with the 'other' and is presented as the opposite of so-called rational European design. The **anonymous** exhibition poster *Het dier in de niet-europese kunst* (The Animal in non-European Art, 1968) for the Antwerp Zoo conveys a similar message: its colours may be striking, but the image and oval shapes reduce non-European art to caricature.


↖
Corneille Hannoset
Postcard, undated

→
Designer unknown
Het dier in de niet-europese kunst, 1968

Most of the designers in this exhibition were teachers — often by necessity, given the precarity of being self-employed. But teaching is also a vocation, giving the teacher a context in which to confront her or his work with new trends and ideas.

Moreover, many of the designers in *Off the Grid* have produced manuals based on their teaching. Examples include **Fernand Baudin**'s *La Typographie au tableau* noir (How Typography Works and Why it is Important, 1984), **Herman Lampaert**'s classroom magazine *Startblok* (Starting Block, 1984) and the research publication *The Genesis of Form: From Chaos to Geometry* (1983) by **Mark Verstockt**.
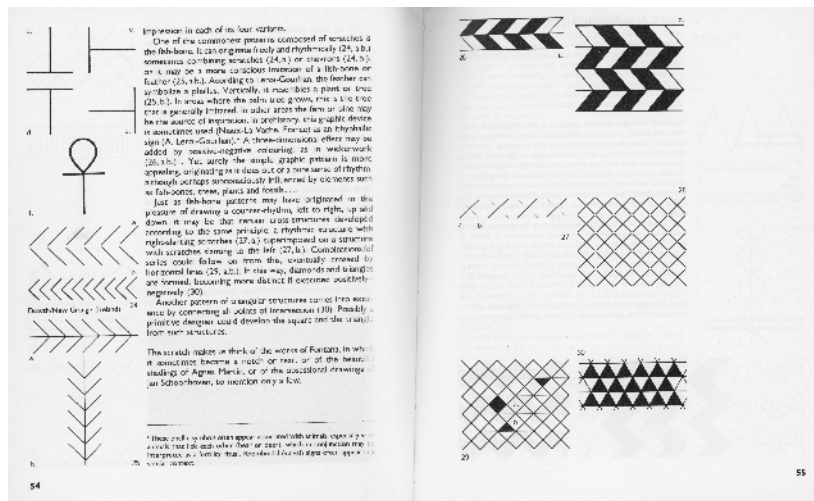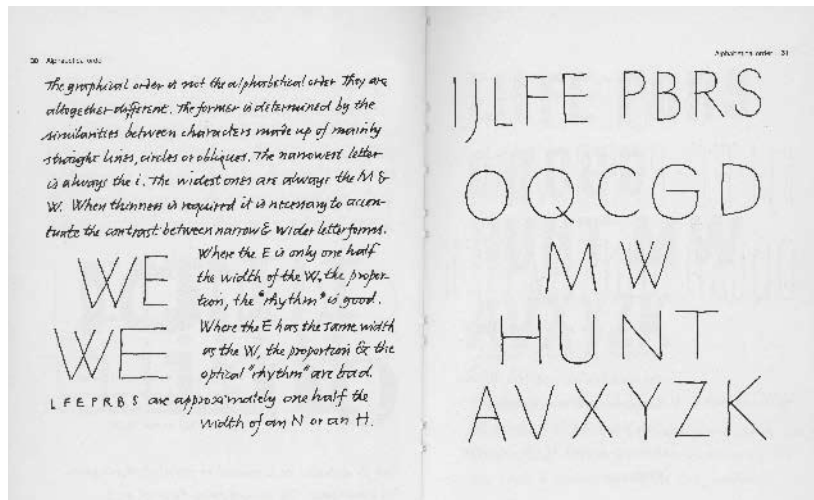
↖
Fernand Baudin
La Typographie au tableau noir, 1984

←
Mark Verstockt
The Genesis of Form: From Chaos to Geometry, 1983

↗
Herman Lampaert
Startblok no.1, 1984

nummer 1

Startblok   is een kursus in grafische initiatie onder tijdschriftvorm.
Het zal op ongeregelde tijden verschijnen want afgestemd op een onmiddelijke pedagogische behoefte en in verband met een zojuist beeindigde leerlingenopdracht. Elk nummer zal één enkel onderwerp behandelen; al of niet diepgaand.
Dit eerste nummer   richt zich aller- eerst tot de studenten van het vierde jaar produktontwikkeling die net een layoutstudie (acht bladzijden over een antwerpse galerij/museum) hebben afgewerkt. We hebben het hier over een deel-onderwerp dat zwaar doorweegt in alle layoutwerk, namelijk de zetwijze van de teksten.

Om enkele verschillende en gangbare zetwijzen onderling goed te kunnen vergelijken en op hun eigenheid te kunnen schatten gaan we alsvolgt te werk: we laten éénzelfde tekst (een voor iedereen begrijpelijke, doorlopende, lektuurtekst) zetten, in éénzelfde letter- korps- interlijn- kleur- achtergrond- maten. Alleen de zetwijzen zijn verschillend (zelfs het aantal aanslagen per regel – een vijftigtal – is nagenoeg identiek gebleven). Benevens de hier getoonde en gangbare zetwijzen kan je nog een hele reeks andere zetwijzen uitdenken. Zij kunnen er al dan niet nodig zijn, in gegeven omstandigheden, naar gelang de aard van de tekst, de lezers, het beoogde doel, de gebruikte materialen en machienes, het budget, het aantal bladzijden waarbinnen gewerkt moet worden...

Een paar preliminaire stellingen (ja-ja), bondig uitgedrukt.
Eigen woorden en teksten layouten is een puur genot. De teksten van anderen in een bladspiegel zetten vergt véél begrip voor die tekst-uit-een-ander-brein. Teksten pogen te layouten die je niet snapt... is pure waanzin!
Het geven van zetinstrukties begint dus met de lektuur van de tekst,... die begint met het begrip van de tekst,... die begint bij de stem,... die begint bij de keel... die begint bij...
De juiste zetwijze heeft ook te maken met een juiste letterkeuze,... die begint met de taal van de tekst,... die begint bij... (het duits heeft lange zinnen en woorden, veel hoofdletters,enz. Andere talen geven andere woord-beelden...). Optornen tegen leesgewoonten is vaak krampachtig; het gaat om een 'vlotte' doorgave van gegevens in schriftvorm.

Belgium has been fortunate to have a dense network of art schools with strong design departments. Sophie Alouf was head of department at St Luc in Brussels, where she taught with Herman Lampaert, Paul Horvath and Jacqueline Ost. Lucien De Roeck and Michel Olyff both taught at La Cambre, where Luc Van Malderen lectured on semiology (the study of signs). In Flanders, Boudewijn Delaere taught in Kortrijk, Hélène Van Coppenolle and Jean-Jacques Stiefenhofer in Antwerp, Luk Mestdagh in Hasselt... the list could go on.

Beyond academia, Josine des Cressonnières played a crucial role in raising the profile of graphic design in Belgium and in supporting practitioners in the field. She was instrumental in running the annual design award, *Signe d'Or* (1956-1960), and a founding member of the Instituut voor industriële vormgeving (Institute for Industrial Design, 1956). Most importantly, Des Cressonnières directed the government-funded **Design Centre** (1964-1986), which organised numerous exhibitions, several of them about graphic design: *Leven van het grafisme* (Making a living from graphic design, 1968), *Graphic Design 67* (1967), *1000 gezichten van het papier* (Paper's 1000 faces, 1968) or solo exhibitions such as *Design-Team in het Design Centre* (Design-Team in the Design Centre, 1971).

Despite the efforts of pioneers and designer-teachers, there are still gaps in the historiography of graphic design in post-war Belgium. One reason is that it is easier to tell histories based on people, but for a lot of graphic design the author is unknown. (One is reminded of the story of the collector who mistakenly hunted for work by the designer 'Vrij van Zegel' [no tax applied], an obligatory mention at the bottom of cultural posters.) This is why my students at KASK and I have been writing Wikipedia entries on Belgian designers over the past two years.

This exhibition is itself a pedagogical endeavour: it stems from my ongoing PhD research at KASK & Conservatorium (HOGENT-Howest). *Off the Grid* is an opportunity to involve colleagues and students in researching the missing stories of Belgian graphic design. And an intensive series of talks and events organised with my colleagues at KASK under the title *This is...* will allow the exhibition to become a site of teaching and learning.

Please visit **this-is.be** for further information.

↑
Sophie Alouf
Le monde du design poster,
1980

→
Jordy Philips
This is... identity, 2019

This is... is programmed by Sara De Bondt together with Dirk Deblauwe, Thomas Desmet, Ronny Duquenne, Arthur Haegeman, Julie Peeters, Stéphane De Schrevel and Jeroen Wille

|		
common-interest, *Are Women the Natural Enemies of Books?*	14.11.2019	19:30
Sara De Bondt with Rob Buytaert & Herman Lampaert, *Exhibition Tour*	24.11.2019	10:30
James Langdon, *Isomorphs*	28.11.2019	19:30
Sara Kaaman (Girls Like Us & MMS), *Paper Food Rooms*	12.12.2019	19:30
Richard Hollis, *Henry van de Velde: The Artist as Designer*	17.12.2019	19:30
Jan Ceuleers, Hilde Pauwels, Jean-Michel Meyers & Hugo Puttaert, *On the Grid*	16.01.2020	19:30
Gerard Herman & Phantom Radio, *Talking Letterheads*	25.01.2020	10:00 – 18:00
Katarina Serulus, Katrien Vanhaute & Jo De Baerdemaeker, *History Class*	13.02.2020	19:30

Extra

Videos

Many designers of the generation featured in this exhibition are, rightly, concerned about what will happen to their work and their legacy. There is no custody institution in Belgium that includes archives of graphic design. This sometimes makes it difficult to track down works and their designers. Architectuur-archief Vlaanderen (Flanders Architecture Archive) has started registering archives of graphic designers in Archiefbank Vlaanderen (Flanders Archive Bank). Together with Design Museum Gent, Architectuurarchief Vlaanderen is the contact point for designers and their heirs. Centre de la Gravure et de l'Image imprimée do the same in Wallonia.

The videos in this section were specially produced for *Off the Grid*. The designers themselves tell their own stories — thus recording valuable knowledge about Belgian design history. After the exhibition, the films will be preserved in the museum archive of Design Museum Gent. I am indebted to **Sophie Alouf**, **Rob Buytaert**, **Boudewijn Delaere**, **Herman Lampaert**, and **Paul Ibou** for taking the time to speak so openly about their work.

Billboard

From 16 November 2019 until 16 January 2020, a billboard with logos by designers in this exhibition will be on display on the façade of Design Museum Gent, as part of an ongoing project by the Ghent artist collective 019.

From top to bottom:
Sophie Alouf, Rob Buytaert, Boudewijn Delaere,
Herman Lampaert, Paul Ibou
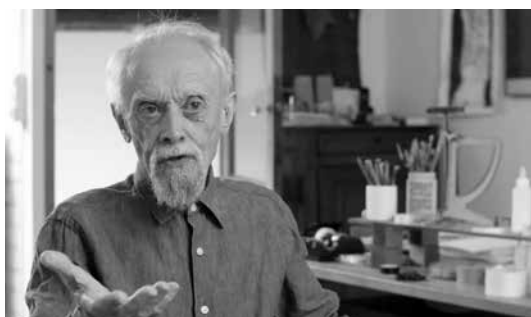
Designers in the Exhibition

Sami Alouf
Sophie Alouf
Fernand Baudin
Jeanine Behaeghel
Herbert Binneweg
Rob Buytaert
Erik Claus
Francine De Boeck
Frans De Jonck
Design-Team
Lucien De Roeck
Yves de Smet
Boudewijn Delaere
Roland Denaeyer
Colette Denaeyer
Jo Dustin
Renaat Eeckhout
Gilles Fiszman
Corneille Hannoset
Paul Horvath
Manfred Hürrig
Paul Ibou
Julian Key

Herman Lampaert
Léo Marfurt
Luk Mestdagh
Urbain Mulkers
Michel Olyff
Jacqueline Ost
André Pasture
Panter Pers
André Piroux
Johan Pot
Jacques Richez
Charles Rohonyi
Albert Setola
Jean-Jacques Stiefenhofer
Hélène van Coppenolle
Louis van den Eede
Luc Van Malderen
Piet Vandekerckhove
Anne Velghe
Rudi Verhelst
Mark Verstockt
Michel Waxmann

Sara De Bondt

Sara De Bondt is an independent graphic designer, teacher and publisher.

Since 2002, she has designed books, visual identities and wayfinding systems for artists and cultural institutions such as Mark Leckey, Rachel Rose, Rosalind Nashashibi, Tate, Liverpool Biennial, WIELS, Camden Arts Centre, Guggenheim, Barbican Art Gallery, and many more. Recent commissions include the identity of Taipei Biennial 2018, a catalogue for Jessica Stockholder at Centraal Museum Utrecht, exhibition graphics for the Wellcome Collection London and books for Kunsthal Bergen, Haus der Kunst Munich and MO.CO Montpellier.

In 2008, she founded publishing company Occasional Papers together with Antony Hudek, and since then has co-edited three of its books: *The Master Builder: Talking with Ken Briggs*, *The Form of the Book Book* and *Graphic Design: History in the Writing (1983–2011)*.

Sara has given lectures in design conferences around the world, and is a member of AGI. She previously taught at Central Saint Martins and The Royal College, both in London, and currently teaches at KASK – School of Arts Ghent, where she is a PhD applicant.

saradebondt.com
occasionalpapers.org

Design Museum Gent · gent: · Vlaanderen verbeelding werkt · KASK KASK · CONSERVATORIUM · HOGENT howest · dS De Standaard

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