

Zak Kyes Working With...
Can Altay, Charles Arsène-Henry,
Shumon Basar, Richard Birkett,
Andrew Blauvelt, Edward Bottoms,
Wayne Daly, Jesko Fezer, Joseph Grigely,
Nikolaus Hirsch, Maria Lind,
Markus Miessen, Michel Müller,
Radim Peško, Barbara Steiner

Tensta konsthall 13.6 – 29.9 2013

afonkurirense

Tensta konsthall

Zak Kyes Working With..., brings together a range of works by graphic designer Zak Kyes, as well as works by several of his collaborators—including architects, artists, writers, curators, editors, and other graphic designers—commissioned specifically for the exhibition. The new works all have a special · structural · role in the making of the exhibition, such as the exhibition display, object captions, exhibition poster, audio guide, workshop, lecture, archive, and publication. This way Kyes and his collaborators explore how graphic design today is a practice that both mediates and is mediated by its allied disciplines.

Zak Kyes Working With... addresses a core issue of contemporary art and design practices: how do we collaborate with others? Rather than presenting a chronological overview of Kyes's work, this exhibition and accompanying book highlight the designer's relations with a range of partners, clients, and institutions. Focusing on the conceptual, visual, and economic intersections inherent in design today, *Zak Kyes Working With...* expands collaborative form from finding ways of working efficiently to the joint development of content.

In addition to graphic design, Kyes' work includes publishing and site-specific

used the typeface Dear Sir/Madam. The original interpretive texts in the exhibition are reprinted in the book, presenting both previous and new collaborations through drawings, letters, texts, conversations, and installation photographs that provide further insight into evolution of processes and thoughts that has contributed to the exhibition.

For his contribution to the exhibition, artist Joseph Grigely has created two exhibition posters · one made with the help of two of the projects contributors, produced in a limited edition, to be shown in the installation, and another for plastering throughout Leipzig, London, and Chicago when the exhibition was shown there. It is now plastered in Tensta. The two posters address two spaces crucial to contemporary art: a general public and a specific public · the cultural institutions visitors.

Writers Shumon Basar and Charles Arsène-Henry have scripted the exhibition's two-channel audio guide, *One Plus One*. Rather than describing the objects presented in the exhibition, two voices narrate the trajectory of an imagined collaboration. Together with Kyes, artist Can Altay has conducted a publishing workshop, *Leipzig Papers: Wessel von Geynung*. The partially fictitious title of Altay's

projects for and in collaboration with cultural institutions. In 2005, he founded the design studio Zak Group, and, in 2006, became art director of the Architectural Association (AA), London. Under the auspices of the AA, he organized the touring exhibition "Forms of Inquiry: The Architecture of Critical Graphic Design," and later cofounded Bedford Press, an imprint that seeks to develop new models for contemporary publishing. By broadening the highly specialized role of the designer, Kyes challenges dominant conceptions of graphic design practice, working to develop and expand the field itself.

For the exhibition, architect Jesko Fezer was invited to consider the role of the exhibition architecture. Fezer proposed ten rules to define and help shape the installation. This strict yet playful system has formed the physical parameters of the exhibition, in which curatorial concerns had to engage with spatial conditions. Responding to the museological trope of the "reading room," one such rule banned the promise of reading in an exhibition space. In response, the designer Wayne Daly developed an additional site for exhibition—a book that is a part of the exhibition and at the same time documents it.

For the exhibition and the publication, typographer Radim Peško has designed and

workshop and his installation of two stacking tables suggests the potential for a space to be a vessel for encounter.

AA archivist Edward Bottoms contributes with his lecture *Independent Site: Experiments in Publishing at the Architectural Association* alongside a double slide projection of archival material that chronicles the AA's efforts to stimulate, encourage, and facilitate the use of journals as sites for experimentation, collaboration, and debate. Architects Nikolaus Hirsch and Michel Müller have devised an exhibition archive that draws upon their project Cybermohalla Hub, a growing cultural laboratory in Delhi. Hirsch and Müller proposed one segment of the larger Cybermohalla Hub structure to represent an archive in relation to exhibition production. Richard Birkett, Andrew Blauvelt, Maria Lind, Markus Miessen and Barbara Steiner have written texts for the catalogue.

Swedish translations of the texts on the labels in the exhibition can be picked up in the reception.

Zak Kyes Working With... has been shown at Galerie für Zeitgenössische Kunst, Leipzig; the Architectural Association, London and the Graham Foundation Chicago.

Zak Kyes will introduce the exhibition at 14:00 on Thursday 13.6.

Wednesday 18.9, at 18:30 Zak Kyes will hold a lecture about his practice at Tensta Konsthall.

Maria Lind: How would you briefly describe *Zak Kyes Working With...* to someone who is new to the project?

Zak Kyes: *Zak Kyes Working With...* is a project in two formats, an exhibition and a book, that portray my collaborative practice as a graphic designer. Collaboration is both the subject and the process as a number of previous collaborators from various disciplines have contributed to shaping of the exhibition.

The exhibition brings together a range of my design projects, as well as works by several of my collaborators—including architects, artists, writers, curators, editors, and other graphic designers—commissioned specifically for the exhibition. Each of these collaborators have been assigned a specific role in the making of the exhibition, such as the exhibition display, object captions, exhibition poster, audio guide, workshop, lecture, archive, and publication.

Rather than presenting a monographic overview that displays the end results of collaborative projects we have attempted to present a series of relationships with partners, clients, and institutions to show the potential of these collaborations to evolve traditional understandings of graphic design, art, and architecture.

ML: What is the significance of the exhibition as a format for you, in this particular case and in general?

ZK: I see the exhibition format as a site to generate material and knowledge. The presentation and display of this material is something that I am engaged in as an exhibition designer, organizer and, in this particular case, as the subject. This approach views books and exhibitions as complementary formats; both deal with the arrangement, structure and display of language, or objects, to communicate an agenda, be it editorial or curatorial.

ML: How does your “collaborative spirit” affect your day-to-day work?

ZK: This attitude is very much part of our daily working method at the office. It’s even apparent in the name of our practice—Zak Group—which reflects the reality, but also the ideal, that design is the creation of a group.

ML: In his contribution to the book, designed by Wayne Daly and part of ZKWW, Markus Miessen brings up the political philosopher Chantal Mouffe and her notion of “conflictual consensus”. How does that, or not, play into

your work? If yes, please give an example!

ZK: In as much as my work is to “work with” the notion of conflict and consensus are part of the everyday reality of collaboration. While I would not directly refer to Mouffe in relation to my practice, the act of “working with” could be seen as a method of negotiating heterogeneous content—and in some cases conflicting positions.

Focusing on the conceptual, visual, and economic intersections inherent in design today, the exhibition, and the notion of “working with” expands collaborative form from a pragmatic structure of working together to the joint development of content.

ML: A vast majority of your collaborators in ZKWW are men. How come?

ZK: The contributors to *Zak Kyes Working With...* range from clients to commissioners and institutional partners. These contributors reflect the invitations I have received and, to a certain extent, betray the status quo of cultural production which needs to be less male, less European and more diverse.

I should also mention that one of the most crucial collaborators included in the project is Barbara Steiner, the curator and

activities, curiosities and obsessions into a single position. For me the intelligence of design lies in its ability to make connections with other disciplines. And in this way design became a passport that allows you to trespass into many different disciplines.

Maria Lind is the director of Tensta konsthall

commissioner of the exhibition. Barbara established the visionary prize, the Inform Award for Conceptual Design awarded by the Galerie für Zeitgenössische Kunst, Leipzig, which originated this project. Your writings, particularly “The Collaborative Turn”, also played a key role in the conceptualization of this project and lead to our work together at Tensta Konsthall.

ML: How and why did you become a graphic designer?

ZK: Cities are, I believe, incredible sources of ideas and London has played a formative role in my practice as a graphic designer. I ended up in London serendipitously after leaving an intended major in art history at a small liberal arts school in New York and later attending CalArts just outside Los Angeles. Having met several architects at the Architectural Association I slowly became involved with the school and at 23 became the Art Director of the AA Print Studio which I still direct. At the same time I founded the studio Zak Group in east London which I now co-direct with a partner.

What first attracted me to graphic design was the porousness of the discipline— it became a way to combine many different