

# [ Teaching Designers Network ]

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No man is an island

*John Donne, Philosopher, 1572 – 1631*

*ref.: »Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions«, 1624*

your actions are pointless if no one notices

*Jenny Holzer, American Concept Artist,*

*born 1950, Project: »Truisms 1979 – 1983«*

## Teaching Designers Network

<http://tdn.freie-hochschule-freiburg.de/>

The training of designers and graphic artists has changed enormously during the last two decades. Up to the eighties individual institutes with a distinct artistic profile offered a clear orientation, but with the beginning of the nineties the hierarchy in which these »schools« had a guiding influence began breaking down. The »digital revolution« with its concomitant upgrading of visual information versus text information has changed our visual culture and our perception lastingly. To the same degree as we have learned to cope with the continuous stream of various visual impulses, it has also become natural for us to think, communicate and work in structures that are no longer linear, but follow the concept of a net.

Today, graphic artists and designers study not only to gain creative skills and knowledge of materials and techniques, but also to acquire abilities in editing, research, distribution, marketing and management of a product. Equally important as this expansion from single- to multi-tasking, however, is learning to work within a group and to productively exchange with other creative people.

### What is the Teaching Designers Network?

Nowadays, more so than ever, design means communication. This is equally true for students and teachers. No design institute can do without making its ideas accessible.

The Teaching Designers Network (TDN) was initiated in the summer of 2004 by the Freie Hochschule fuer Grafik-Design und Bildende Kuenste in Freiburg (Germany) in order to encourage necessary developments in teaching and to interconnect design instruction throughout the network.

We see ourselves as a platform for teachers and students at design institutes around the world. The TDN aims at establishing an international exchange on practices of visual communication and their conditions in different cultural contexts. The TDN is a non-profit-project and therefore in principle open to all who are interested. Participation is free of costs or obligations.

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## **Teaching Designers Network: How does it work?**

Every year a member of our network proposes a design project (e.g. a poster) that all participating institutes include in their curriculum. Between January and August the students, individually or in groups of two, work on the proposed project as their term projects. After a detailed presentation in the classrooms all completed projects will be put on the homepages of the institutes for discussion. All participating lecturers are free to adapt the project proposals and the setting of tasks according to their specific needs.

## **The Teaching Designers Network as a virtual classroom**

The integration into such a network is a challenge especially for the students, not only because they can reach a larger audience with their work, but also because the international comparison of the respective TDN projects stimulates the creative exchange between all participants. This exchange helps gain an insight into the different concepts of design and will of course bring about many international contacts between future designers.

The TDN is work in progress that places the development of a singular design into a larger context, thereby revealing its specific historical and cultural presuppositions. Although »visual culture«, like the economy, has to comply with the laws of globalisation, it is the cultural distinctions that create the difference between the vision of a designer in Los Angeles and that of his colleague in Moscow. To get to know these cultural distinctions is to broaden one's mind. And to discuss them collectively is to take difference seriously as creative capital for artistic work.

To a great extent this is also true for the teachers. In addition, the TDN promotes exchange on teaching methods and on different ideas about practical and project-oriented teaching.

## **Design History Poster: Teaching Designers Network's first project**

During the summer of 2003 the Freie Hochschule fuer Grafik-Design und Bildende Kunst Freiburg sent off by mail a briefing for TDN's first project. The assignment for students as of the 3rd term was to create a »Design History Poster«. The task was to portray an important figure out of the history of design using words (essay/lecture) and different visual media (collage, film, objects, etc.), and to design a poster in the visual language of the person being portrayed.

Altogether seven institutes were contacted with the first TDN-project. The response was favourable with four design institutes taking part. As of August 2004 the results can be seen on the local homepages of the institutes and can be commented on in the guestbooks.

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## Contact the »Teaching Designers Network«

If you work as a teacher in the field of graphic design and if you want to take part in the TDN, you are welcome to contact us.

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## Short English Version:

Teaching Designers Network

We are an international group of teaching designers.

Our network is based on an open exchange of visual communication.

Every year one of us will set up a student handout and everyone interested can join working within the same parameters. The coming handout will be shown on our web site during the Winter term and should be finished by Summer next year.

As a teaching designer you can use or modify the agenda according to your program. By using the web different schools can present their results and students and teachers can compare their own designs in an international context. Feel free to comment on the Freiburg presentation and on those of the partner schools.

<http://tdn.freie-hochschule-freiburg.de/>

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