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## **Development of graphic design in Slovakia after 1989 – position of graduates from Department of Visual Communication in Bratislava**

### **Abstract:**

In my research I focused on mapping production and education development of graphic designers who graduates at the Academy of Fine Arts and Design/ Department of Visual Communication in Bratislava after 1989 till approx. 2012. I interest about graphic design as a communication, which produce and reproduce social order and its values and believe (*Malcolm Barnard, The Graphic Design as Communication*). I focus on specific community of graduates in Slovakia and I interest how they react on that through their connection with clients, profession position and own topics. The Department is playing important role in the professionalization of graphic designers as well as in settings of qualitative visual culture level in Slovakia. It is the oldest (and almost only one) University for graphic design education there and with more then 180 graduates it is developed own community with thinking about graphic design values. Before 1989 the field was called applied graphic and at the Academy the Department was under Soviet and ideology and control (known as Department of Political Poster).

The generation of first “graphic designers” in that time was closer to independent art and esthetical approaches. They became also first teachers (*Lubomír Longauer, Zoltán Salamon, Pavel Choma, Stanislav Stankoci*) who started teach at the new departments of graphic design after revolution at 1989. Between 1989 and 2012 I divided graduates to four generations types according to common topics, projects, cooperations and design thinking. According to that the first three generations mostly during studies and in their professional projects tried to define field of graphic design and its meaning and values against market-driven design production. They mostly focus on their own topics and criticism of conditions for graphic designers and implementations of values. The generation of graduates between 2001–2006 (*Marcel Benčík, Ján Šicko, Pavel Bálik, ...*) is important because it connected with building

new independent culture in Slovakia and civil activism. And also started to concentrate for author's projects, local issues connected with public spaces (*Living underground* workshop). They also try to defined professional community discourse (through *Kupé* conference). This is the first generation which "fighting" for to be independent (for "higher" culture values and promotion of design in different levels) and was against the commercialization (impact of 90s) of visual design production. The fourth generation between 2007 – 2012 (*Juraj Blaško, Eva Kaššáková, Katarína Balážiková, Matúš Lelovský, etc.*) is characteristic in work model as freelancer and the cooperation mostly with culture sphere and local Slovak companies and market. They are opened to work with both approaches – market needs and cultural values (closed to new "young businesses" cooperation).

Nowadays I am analysing the common phenomena through the generations. I can evaluate how the methodology of education influenced all of these designers and how this approach is still closely connected with art approach more then relationships with society needs and issues in Slovakia. The graphic design of Academy discourse is more significant as alternative production with not a big infrastructure and design policy (more bottom-up activity).

### **Methodological and analytical approach:**

I mostly made qualitative research and interviewed selected designers according to their activities on the field of graphic design, education, organization activities and their quality of production. I made mostly interviews to get memories and opinions of these designers then compare facts and opinion between themselves. From other resources I work with information and materials from Slovak Centre of Design (f.e. the exhibition of National Awards in Communication Design 2016), Slovak Museum of Design (collection of students projects and works from Department of Graphic Design) and Academy of Fine Arts and design as well as from personal archives and portfolios of designers.

In first part of my thesis (collecting part) I explain how the education and approaches for production changed in every of this generation. I explain the reasons for the generations change in context of the time and changing socio-economic situation in Slovakia and also in context of generation/designers visions about the field itself. I describe that from the view of designers and their thinking.

Nowadays I am selecting common graphic design phenomena of graduates through

generations. In this second part of my thesis (analytical and critical part) I will use the information from first part to look at them from outside point of view and explain social, economical and culture function of graphic design (discourse of graduates). Then I will define where I can see a role of graduate's production in Slovak society and culture development.

**My research questions:**

What is the social, economical and culture function of graphic design production of graduates from the Department of Visual Communication after 1989?

What is the position of graphic designers-graduates discourse in contemporary society of Slovakia?

**Problems and questions I would like to address:**

There is not that many research about graphic design from point of view closed more to sociology in the Central and Eastern European countries. I would be interest about some similar study or research of designers and artists like I am doing – from Western European point of view or so on. Also I would be interest about how to talk about my research with professions from sociology and cultural anthropology interest in design? We do not have in Slovakia specialists for this area of culture.

What type of methodology and approach would be helpful for me to think about effective analysing of collected data about generation's development?

My observing community and selected designers for my research is quite small sample. May it be a problem for relevance of information and for argumentation of my opinions? How can I support this qualitative research relevance during final presentation of my dissertation? (f.e. Brochure with interviews, ...)