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Review of Andreas Beck, Nicola Kaminski, Volker Mergenthaler, and Jens Ruchatz, eds, *Visuelles Design: Die Journalseite als gestaltete Fläche / Visual Design: The Periodical Page as a Designed Surface*

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Reviews

Andreas Beck, Nicola Kaminski, Volker Mergenthaler, and Jens Ruchatz, eds, *Visuelles Design: Die Journalseite als gestaltete Fläche / Visual Design: The Periodical Page as a Designed Surface* (Hanover: Wehrhahn, 2019). 455 pp. ISBN 9783865256966

This rich and wide-ranging collection of essays investigates how, between the early nineteenth century and the interwar period, the graphic elements of journal culture changed to accommodate new presentation strategies, formats, materialities, and ideologies. Drawing together eighteen chapters written in English, French, or German, it investigates the periodical page less as the organized grouping of texts and images than as a material object which prompts a range of sense-based responses. From the ornamentation of the masthead to the font, column width, and page divisions, a journal's rules of design influence the visual impressions that readers gain from turning its pages. The haptic experiences associated with pull-outs and fold-outs add another dimension to readers' signifying practices. Divided into six main sections — 'History of Technology and Layout', 'Cultures of Reception', 'Typographic Strategies', 'Change of Media Formats', 'Materiality of the Page', 'Ideological Implications of Formatting' — the chapters are broadly informed by approaches from multimodality theory and social semiotics (Bucher, Kress, and Van Leeuwen) to investigate the meaning-making strategies that periodicals activate in their readers.

The introduction by three of the editors, Volker Mergenthaler, Jens Ruchatz, and Andreas Beck, replicates with wonderful visual play key aspects of design in the nineteenth-century journal. Coily using the abbreviations 'Mrgth.', 'Rtz.', and 'Dr. B.' to indicate authorship of its different sections, it addresses the relationship between page design and reading practices, the development of graphic elements (including photography)

in relation to changing printing techniques, and the use of double spreads to expand a journal's spatial possibilities. The first main section then focuses on key changes to printing technology and formatting in the 'long' nineteenth century. Central among them was the introduction of linotype, which, as Nikolaus Weichselbaumer shows, revolutionized typesetting by producing an entire line of metal type in one go, thus speeding up the process of text production previously dependent on letter-by-letter typesetting. This also had implications for layout, since it was easier to move these blocks of type around the page. At the same time, it introduced the visual homogeneity and regularity to columns on a page that we expect of newsprint today. Related ideas are addressed in Tom Gretton's investigation of the pictorial matter in journals of the 'Illustrated News' genre. He stresses that the effect periodical pages have on their reader-viewers derives both from the content of the texts published and the design agenda of those assembling, selecting, and arranging material for the page. These 'maker-roles' (p. 78) have tended to be overlooked, primarily because agents like engravers and editorial artists are hard to identify. Yet the composite images that typified the genre were collaborative undertakings that highlighted the skill of the artistic agents involved.

Pursuing the idea of the journal as more than just the sum of its parts, Vincent Fröhlich's contribution examines how, in early-twentieth-century magazines like the *Tatler*, arrangement was intrinsic to recognizability. By looking at the viewing direction of the portraited figures and the arrangement of photography on a page, Fröhlich concludes that high-class

magazines prioritized symmetry and order to vaunt design quality. Nevertheless, they were also conscious that ostentatious symmetry could make arrangement look forced. Images are also central to Hala Aujji's chapter, which transports us to nineteenth-century scientific publication in the Ottoman empire. It shows how some engravings in these Arabic periodicals were originally sourced from Western books on related subject matter published several decades earlier, while other images had originally emerged in rather different contexts. The re-use of imagery also concerns Thierry Gervais's discussion of how photographs in the French weeklies *Le Journal illustré* and *L'Illustration* were subtly retouched, or reframed through cropping, either to enhance them aesthetically or heighten their relevance for the accompanying narratives. The subsequent halftone reproductions pose interesting questions about photographic authenticity and about new techniques of artistic experimentation in the early twentieth century.

The second section, which places the reading public centre-stage, examines how periodicals used layout either to target specific niche readerships or appeal to a wider audience. In a comparison of the French gentleman's magazine *Monsieur* and the Francophone edition of *Vogue* in the interwar period, Zsolt Mészáros investigates how illustration, photography, and advertising sent signals about style, urbanity, and gender. *Monsieur* revived ideas of an unintrusive male elegance typical of a pre-war France, while *Vogue français* was more future-looking, open, and international. General-interest magazines, a publishing staple by the 1880s, form the focus of the following chapter, in which Kirsten Belgum turns our attention to images with a broad geographical interest to explore how illustration drew attention to the materiality of the page. By playing with optical illusions — exotic plants sprouting forth from the page, birds diving in and out of the text — these magazines

used illustration to heighten the visual interest of these articles.

The third section, 'Typographic Strategies', investigates other ways that images were employed to play with readerly curiosity. Marie-Ève Thérénty alerts us to a fascinating phenomenon in the interwar magazines *Voilà*, *Vu*, and *Détective* — a cover on both their front and reverse. This, she proposes, turned the reader into a 'sandwich-board' figure (p. 213) who advertised from two angles the journal being read. The images juxtaposed on the covers were also in dialogue with each other, like stills in a silent movie. A different promotional strategy was, as Stephen Donovan highlights in his discussion of Victorian investigative journalism, the use of lurid subject matter. Formal innovations associated with New Journalism — 'screaming' headlines in capitalized, large fonts and the use of 'crossheads', i.e. subheadings midway through a text — drew the reader's eye in, while also breaking the text up into bite-sized portions. These crossheads, Donovan argues, served an important indexical purpose by referencing the text they headed and an implied visual scene, while also calling attention to their own graphic vibrancy. Carole O'Reilly's chapter, similarly located in urban space, compares three satirical magazines published in 1860s and 1870s Manchester (the 'other Fleet Street'). She emphasizes how the place of production was central, given that municipal philistinism was frequently criticized, and shows how 'free lance' journalism, a term built into these papers' mastheads, was often an important stepping-stone towards more stable employment.

The fourth section investigates the porosity between book and journal cultures. Gustav Frank and Madleen Podewski take a poem by the German Romantic writer Eduard Mörike, published in an 1846 issue of the *Morgenblatt für gebildete Leser* and in an 1848 anthology, to investigate how typography, layout, and contextual juxtapositioning in these different media

contexts reconfigure a text to locate it in rather different discourses. From a different angle, Felix Koltermann's investigation of the photobook, a genre which emerged in the 1920s, explores how images can have a stand-alone character, yet also contribute to the larger pictorial narrative of the book by sustaining or contradicting it.

Turning to the materiality of the page, the chapters in the fifth section ask us to reflect on the haptic experience of reading and using magazines. Christian A. Bachmann investigates how the performative qualities of early nineteenth-century Germanophone satirical magazines involved a cooperative dialogue between a journal and its readers, who were invited to pull out folded spreads, rotate the page in the case of optical illusions, and hold cut-outs up to the light. These activation strategies prompted cognitive processes with an obviously humorous and political intent, but also drew attention to the possibilities of paper as more than just an ink-carrying medium. Thinking about the uses of paper also calls for reflection on what happens to the blank, unprinted spaces. Andreas Beck's chapter considers how, in nineteenth-century magazines, printed text or images are almost always a lingering presence on the other side of the paper, and those areas without print or shadow are particularly striking parts of the page. Paper, Vance Byrd's contribution also reminds us, is not just there for the reading. His intriguing excursion into the world of nineteenth-century women's fashion periodicals reminds us that the sewing supplements — embroidery designs and dressmaking patterns — were an integral part of the journal, now often missing in archived copies. Yet these were essential to the interactive enjoyment women had of such magazines, which guided them step-by-step towards imagining their fashionable selves.

The last section explores the ideological implications of certain formats in magazine culture. Working with the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century *Journal des Luxus und der Moden*, Katharina Eck investigates how its visual markers appealed to the tastes of upper-class households, keen to be guided and educated by its regimes of display. The text-image relations can therefore be read as ways to aid 'improvement' within the prevailing social hierarchies of power. Thinking about typography as a reaction against norms, Nicola Kaminski investigates how the German literary journal *Phöbus* presented classical theatre texts on the page in ways that made it a space of disharmony rather than order. Finally, Jennifer A. Greenhill's contribution turns our attention to the role of commercial advertising in early twentieth-century trade journals as a form of 'modern pictorial selling' (p. 429). Creating a pleasing visual effect was central, and the division of space and the movement of the eye across the page were aspects overtly commented upon by designers.

This collection offers a remarkably full and multi-faceted account of the possibilities of the journal page — materially, visually, politically, and culturally. One of its major achievements is to restore issues of agency to discussions of print culture, in turn reminding us of the rootedness of the periodical in the technologies of its production, the creativity of its contributors and the cognitive responses of its readers. This edited volume will serve as inspiration for researchers from a range of fields, including (comparative) literary and media studies, art and design history, history of science, and publishing history.

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