

## Opponent review

**candidate: Aleksandar Donev, Msc**

**doctoral thesis: Typography in Advertisement**

**supervisor: Doc. PhDr. Zdeno Kolesár, PhD.**

**school: Tomas Bata University in Zlín, Faculty of Multimedia Communications**

*In general every topic deserve reasearch, discovering, analyzing and development. In accordance to this "preamble" is the doctoral thesis of Mr. Aleksandar Donev eye catching.*

Submitted work is mainly presentatition of historical, typological and subjective re-views and arrangements of information about typefaces with the strong effort to catch its context in advertisement. Mr. Donev is widely looking at semiotical, historical, psychological, aestetical aspects of typefaces. Writing about evolution of written text (typefaces) trough the centuries from Mesopotamia into nowadays. He is also trying to look at their aspects in relation, role and the use in advertisement "design" and design in general. Separate part is devoted to classification of typefaces in conventional clas-sification method (serif, sans serif, digital, color and psychological aspects in general). All this I considern as fundamental part of typography. In Part II - Use of type in con-temporary design and advertisment Mr. Donev examined the role and use of typog-raphy via wide range of examples. Concentration of candidate to this subject matter is trough mixture between his subjective observation and compile of broadly explored information about the relation between typeface and advertisment and communica-tion in general (also with sight based on conventional classification). In end of his text he is presenting anatomy and framework of type terminology (I would maybe consider is that the best emplacement in the structure of the book? And finally his practical sur-vey (questionary and results).

### **Part I - Semiotic, historic, psychological and aesthetic aspects of typefaces.**

I consider this section as better part of the book. I have no special comments to it be-sides the oversubscription of some parts. But generally well done.

### **Part II - use of type in contemporary design and advertisement.**

Exciting to see trough how many sources candidate went. It is obvious that his con-centration for searching, exploring and gathering the information and data was enour-mous. And maybe that cause the problem that the analysis, evaluation and verification of gathered material is in my point of view weaker. In the work we can find a lot con-tradictions, outdated informations and therefore less credible and confusing readers experience. I also noticed intuitive and lyrical reviewing and opinion making in some points. Candidate should be much more aware and cautious about it (in his future writ-ing). To illustrate this issues I picked just very few examples from many:

#### **1. Contradiction**

One of the most popular methods is the grid system. It suggests that all the design elements should be aligned on evenly spaced horizontal and vertical lines. The method has long been taught in design education and can be helpful in any design. (p. 118)

vs.

Design should be based on intuition or feeling because every design should serve its purpose, depending on the project. Often breaking the rules will produce great results and generate a unique feeling. Design should be based on visual taste not rules. (p. 119)

*Should we follow rules or feelings? Of course design is the accurate mix of both but we have to clearly and objectively define or describe.*

## **2. Trends**

Another recent trend in typography that is becoming popular is mixing and matching different typefaces, creating typographical composition. Usually in this technique the typefaces are from diametrically opposite categories and styles but when they are combined together the result can be very striking and give some handcrafted but at the same time artistic look. This style similar like hand lettering is also focused on creating a retro appearance and mood in the design. The style is very popular on the web but also it started to grow in print advertising as well. (p. 161)

*This trend is already noticed back in 80's when the personal computer came in charge (widely used by graphic designers) and we see this method of work in wide range of postmodern graphic designers back in that time.*

## **3. Validity**

Another factor that might influence the presence of sans serif typefaces is the rise of the web as a medium as sans serif typefaces, due to the limitation of screen resolution, are believed to look much better on the web compared to serif. (p. 152)

*I believe that development of digital technologies and also focus on forms of letters of type designers already solved this problem and most of the recently designed typefaces contains versios for digital media. I suggest to record the change.*

## **4. Oversubscription**

The above figure (12.10) shows a page extract from a Honda Motorcycle catalogue. The catalogue has very clean and modern look using Akzidenz-Grotesk, Neue Helvetica and Futura to display the text. The model number of the motorcycle is displayed with large letters and the name of the model with smaller letters below it. In the top right corner the model's specification are displayed in detail and an image of the product is featured on the bottom part of the page. (p. 174)

*Without a comment.*

## **Apendices (Survey)**

I am trying to understand what is the value of survey results of Mr. Donev work? In his evaluation we can find over fourty most favorite, over fourty second most favorite over fourty third most favorite typefaces with attributes such as beautiful, elegant and

clean. And approximately the same amount of least favorite typefaces. List of most using typefaces (as subjective opinion of respondents). In this list we have to find out by our selves that Helvetica and Gotham are number one and number two. Simply long lists of informations that cannot be evaluated and bring out some clear result because the method of doing survey was simply just wrong.

For example if Mr. Donev would simply make short list of e.g. most using, most popular, best selling, etc. typefaces (internet is full of statistics and charts) and organized the e.g. in conventional classification (serif, sans serif, date of design, number of glyphs, language versions or what ever else), he would get valuable comparable data and will be succesful with survey results. Of course there is also a chance to leave little bit of space for individual opinion, observation and selection of user... would come with interesting results too.

I value the ambition of candidate to do practical reasearch but I honestly see lack of professional and objective set of criteria, structure and method of this part of scientific work. **If we don't correctly set the inputs we never can get valuable and usable outputs.**

## Survey


I believe that practical survey (would be better if it is more serious research) is important part of any doctoral thesis. But work of Mr. Donev has several defects: 1. To make valuable survey we need bigger amount respondents selected in certain structure proportion (graphic designers, students of graphic design etc.). The structure of respondents should be related to approximate number of people related to typeface design (type designers, users of typefaces etc.) or at least selection of the respondents related to surveying geographical area. In making survey we have to also think about the statistical error (+- 3% or more - in accordance the amount of surveying people). I am sure that in nowadays it is not difficult to find accurate method of surveying suitable for type design or graphic design in general on internet. I am not sure if survey based on 45 respondents is valuable enough.

I would also suggest that would be great if the PhD candidate would be more objective in proposing categories of his survey. For example in the questionnaire we can find the question: Which typefaces do you use most in your design?; Reason why? - and - the choices for the answers: Beautiful, Classic, Elegant, Distinct, Clean, Stylish, Modern and only one objective: Legible/Readable. I am sorry but I cannot admit such classification. In the "world" of typefaces we can easily find more objective, rational and logical possibilities (classification): such as: legibility, readability (each has different meaning), aesthetics, intention and as just one of the options can be e.g. personal criteria (e.g. mood, aestetical preferences etc.). Same problem appears also in the question: Which typeface is your least favorite for using in different design? Reason why?: Ugly, Dated, Cheap, Overused, Boring, etc. For example how we can concidern the typeface as cheap using some objective criteria? ... Instead of these „categories“ I would reccomand the same list as I mentioned above.

## Evaluation

Main value of the thesis of Mr. Donev is that he has done a lot of survey on internet sources and books. He create compilation of many truths and mistakes (even the mistakes are presented as truths) in tracking of type design and its practical use in world of advertisment and visual communication in general. I also regard the quality of english written text (even I think that it contains to much citations and someone elses text). I wish my english would be at the same level... To be honest the work of candidate it is on the beginning of the research that can bring the new results and can develop our profession. No matter the result of doctorate jury I suggest to continue on the work in a future.

Nevertheless to all my comments, reflexions and suggestions I recommend to evaluate and to accept candidates work.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a vertical line that curves into a stylized, looped shape.

Mgr. art. Marcel Benčík, Artd.  
Bratislava, December 6th, 2015