

## Foreword

Europe as an idea is a very compelling one, but far from being adequately formulated, as it has signified many different things over the years. In this state of incompleteness lies the chance, space and moment for interpreting Europe's future.

The cornerstones of the European idea seem clear: humanism, equality, tolerance and enlightenment. But if we consider the European Union, Europe is clearly an economic zone above all. Europe and its accompanying key-element, the Euro, are currently in crisis. It seems, that as a consequence of this, the values of the European idea are being traded against the European market.

But the European living environment is too precious and its citizens have too many emerging possibilities to allow it crumble without resistance as the result of market logic. This attempt, therefore, is not trying to reanimate Europe as a political entity, but rather to rethink the idea of Europe, as openly as possible.

The project combines three aspects: a collaborative approach for collecting ideas, an examination of the potential of creative fields and a peek into the future.

Creative disciplines already employ such forward-thinking techniques in their everyday-approaches, without questioning it: the projection of could-be's and the realisation of needed steps. But this potential is smothered by political, social, and especially economic aspects, as is the nature of things. That's the moment when emancipative acting comes into play, to stand up for an idea. It all starts with the will to question man-made circumstances and the role of oneself.

Through the publishing of the project in the form of this small leaflet, a body of work for discussion is now circulating. I hope to enrich the discourse on Europe's future with it.

Reinhard Schmidt

# How Europe is constituted through its created manifestations

At first sight, the concept of Europe doesn't seem to be a topic for the creative professions, but apart from formal laws and archetypes, many symbols and efforts can be seen as expression of an effort to shape Europe.

From the Leitmotif – “United in Diversity”, “Unie dans la diversité” – to the flag designed by Arsène Heitz and Beethoven's hymn “Ode to joy”, the European blue (RGB: 0/51/153) or the European banknotes and coins, the European Union is based on abstract but unified modes of appearance.

The question is if these symbols actually influence and improve the building of identity or if they are just accepted as a form of branding. Inarguably, these elements are used for creating a clear and recognisable symbolic frame, ideally resulting in successful identification of the target group – the citizens of Europe.

In principle, this is about the creation of a brand, similar to the branding efforts of a corporation – in this case the idea of a united Europe being the product. Anyway, it is difficult to imagine another approach to such a complex and wide topic in a different way. To communicate the European idea recognisably and clearly, forms and patterns are definitely needed.

However, considering that the united Europe is perceived more of an administrative act, it is important that the Europeans themselves see that they can actively shape it in order to identify with it. It should not be seen as a product ready to consume, a product the citizens can decide for or against. But if the people don't feel that the symbols consider their cultural diversity, it will be difficult to reach the needed level of identification.

Europe as an idea will always include the confrontation of diversity. Following the motto “United in Diversity”, it should however not be a standardisation of forms and symbols that stands at the center, but rather acknowledging and understanding the symbols of others or awakening curiosity to explore the joint cultural and symbolic sphere which Europe is.

Architecture, industrial-design, fashion, arts, literature and music are naturally very different in different cultures. Why not see the idea of Europe as building a competence to “read” and understand the underlying meanings and values. However, the global economy and also the European Union as phenomenon of design, both, in the best case consider this only marginally. Their target is in fact to increase efficiency, and transform everything laborious and bulky into stream-lined and homogenous conformity. Sure, on a meta-level this creates ideal

structures for exchange but from a cultural point of view it impoverishes, it deletes the characteristic aspects which are inherent to the cultural sphere in Europe.

### The role of the creative disciplines

But a constructive counterforce can come from the creative disciplines. These creative professions fulfill in a sense, but in another way, the motto of the European union. They base their approaches on drafting, designing, envisioning, prototyping, they discover numerous possibilities of interpretations and variations. They meet the need of homogenisation and control in the European Union with a very European value: by letting the humans and their needs become the point of orientation. If creative work is approached that way, it inherits a socio-cultural function.

This of course is a huge task and it opens up the discourse of what the identity and the role of the creative disciplines could be in the context of the complex idea of a united Europe. Considering its regional fragmentation, the architect Jesko Fezer made a suggestion in his interview for this project: “A Europe of Places. The local sphere is a more designable space and offers more potential for creative reworking and interventions. But the local shouldn't close itself off towards the outer, it should not to be seen as a place of escapism, it must rather be open and connectable to be in relation to other localities”.

In a time of pressing political issues, opposed by a political nonchalance of those whose living conditions are still found stable, which are the political functions of the creative disciplines? How can a discourse be shaped with the tools, methods and expertise of the creatives? And which values, goals and purpose should they feel responsible for? The question about the political roles of design, arts and architecture is very relevant and there is no answer yet. Rather the project wanted to address it and trigger the discussion.

### On Invisible design

Therefore, relevant thoughts can be found in the thinking of Lucius Burckhardt (1925 - 2003), founding member of several German universities for design, guest lecturer at the ETH Zurich and chairman of the German Werkbund from 1976 to 1986. Lucius Burckhardt broke with the design-utopias of the avant-gardists of modernism, which until today belong to the mainstream, by declaring it a mistake to believe in the realisation of a more human world through better design. This is because the range and the power

sation of a more human world through better design. This is because the range and the power of design seems marginal compared to institutional and organisational powers. For him, the solution was not within the appearance of the design itself but in its political function.<sup>2</sup>

More than on the visible form of a design, he intensely considered in his oeuvre the invisible framework of which the design was an result of. For him, the counterpart of the visible environment, was next to designed objects, constituted by interpersonal relations and their ways of interaction. It must be said that these relations are as well designed, by culture and tradition but also by people living nowadays.<sup>3</sup>

The yet present-day understanding of "Invisible design" appeared to him as highly conventional, which was not just following, but also reproducing and intensifying the circumstances of not taking into account any social function. For him, a real design of tomorrow would be a concept, able to put this aspects into relation with each other.<sup>4</sup>

Since then nothing has changed in this respect. There is still a strong pressure for designs and products to persist in the market, which intensifies this effect. Especially design must not resist but follow the imperative, in a discreet, appealing and functional manner. What doesn't meet expectations, what challenges has only little chances of survival. In some way, Europe is lacking exactly this room for idiosyncrasy.

The curator Joanna Warsza emphasised, that especially the arts inherit a creative potential to change social circumstances, to trigger new impulses in other fields, which can then be handed on, for example to politics. The arts should not be self sufficient, and they must be taken serious in other sectors of society, also in other creative disciplines.

The main question remains, how the isolated parts of these specialist-debates of art, political science and design, can be combined and put in a form in which they can go beyond their own communities and connect with each other. Maybe exactly herein lies the most demanding task of the creative disciplines. And eventually it is exactly for this reason to consider the own role and the self image more intensely.

- 1 See also: Victor Papanek, *Design for the Real World: Human Ecology and Social Change*, New York 1971.
- 2 Lucius Burckhardt, "Design heisst Entwurf, nicht Gestalt!", *Design? Umwelt wird in Frage gestellt*, Ed. Internationales Design Zentrum, Berlin 1970 as cited in Lucius Burckhardt: *Design heisst Entwurf*, Studienhefte Problemorientiertes Design 3, Hamburg 2012, p. 9 ff.
- 3 Lucius Burckhardt, "Design ist unsichtbar", *Forum Design - Design ist unsichtbar*, Ed. Helmut Gsöllpointner, Angela Hareiter, Laurids Ortner, Wien 1981 as cited in Lucius Burckhardt, *Design heisst Entwurf*, Studienhefte Problemorientiertes Design 3, Hamburg 2012, p. 17 - 20.
- 4 Ibid, p. 45 - 46.

"Future Europe" is the BA-Thesis of Reinhard Schmidt.

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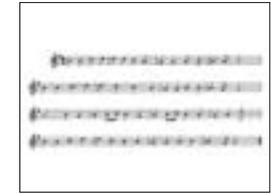
## Examples of constituting elements realised by the creative disciplines:



View of the European Parliament in Strasbourg. The central scenography of the hall is used to focus attention. A popular archetype of how architecture can be applied to manifest power.



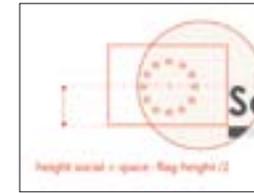
The Euro pallet is an example of industrial design for the European government. In its normed dimensions and broad use, the Euro pallet can be also seen as a form of pattern covering Europe.



Ludwig van Beethoven's Symphony No. 9, better known as "Ode to Joy", is the national hymn of the European Union.



Work in Frankfurt at the day of the introduction of the Euro in 1999. It could be also called a "Human art installation".



Style-guide on the design of the European flag. An example on how graphic design is applied to create the corporate identity of EU-Government.



A sculpture at the seat of the European Parliament in Strasbourg, France. It shows the hijacking of the goddess Europa. As narration of Europe's creation, it is there to set the present in relation with its past.

## Other approaches on the topic of "Europe":



In Katarina Zdjelar's, video art piece "Shoum", two men from Belgrade phonetically transcribe their version of Tears for Fears hit "Shout" and create so something between the foreign and familiar.



Draft of an alternative European flag by Hans Kruit. Contribution for the "New symbol for Europe"-competition, held in May 2010 by the "The Hague Design and Government"-foundation.



Max Ernst's painting "Europa nach dem Regen I" (eng. "Europe after the Rain I") from 1933, used a similar approach like this project. The depiction indicates a Europe without borders.

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