

Interview with Anja Lutz

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Andrea Iten: Yes, then I welcome you very warmly. Thank you very much for letting Magenta be a guest here in the exhibition space [A to Z](#) in Berlin-Mitte. How long have you been on the road with this project room?

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Anja Lutz: We started last year in April. The exhibition that is currently being set up here is the ninth, the ninth project that is taking place here.

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Andrea Iten: Yeah, a lot has happened now. What has changed because of Corona, how do the conditions look like for you as manager?

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Anja Lutz: We always try to keep ourselves up to date with the latest information about the requirements. To be honest, sometimes I don't quite understand it myself. But what has changed is that one exhibition was actually cancelled, or has just been postponed until autumn. So we had a longer phase where the exhibition with Niklaus Troxler simply went on. At the end of May we had actually opened a new exhibition. With the concept of having as few people as possible in here, inside with a mask and disinfection. And at least now in summer we are lucky to have this large and wide sidewalk in front of the shop. That means that as long as the weather is good, it's possible, because of course a lot of people can come and spread out outside. And we make sure that there are no more than 5-6-8 max. 10 people inside.

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Andrea Iten: Yes, the next event, as you have already mentioned, opens upcoming week. Which positions will be represented?

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Anja Lutz: The next project now on display is from the *Liberation in Print Collective*. Initiated by Corinne Gisel and Nina Paim from [common-interest](#) together with the [design school Le Signe](#), it's about feminist publishing, about researching what was created worldwide in the 60s, 70s, 80s. And this is actually a project that, interestingly enough, has a lot to do with Corona. When common-interest was originally invited to give a workshop at Le signe in Chaumont, it was normally planned as a face-to-face workshop. Since that didn't work out, it became an online workshop, but what resulted was that people, designers, activists, researchers from all over the world took part, from New Zealand, Chile, Dubai, Algeria, from all over the world. Which of course would not have been the case in Chaumont otherwise. And each participant had the task of researching, researching feminist publishing in their own country. There were obviously feminist publishing projects in almost every country in the sixties, seventies, eighties. And so this has actually become a project where an incredible amount has been collected, which would not have come about in this form without this compulsion to hold this workshop online.

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Andrea Iten: So despite all the negatives, it really is also an advantage that it is becoming broader, more international or global, which will perhaps also reverberate.

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Anja Lutz: They also told me today, which was great of course, that people from Dubai, for example, thought this way, oh I am the only one who is interested in something like that. Suddenly this workshop of 23 participants was born, all of them interested in the same topic. Of course, this gave an incredible boost, especially to some participants who are in countries where it is perhaps not on the agenda or is less discussed. And it was also great: I took part in the final presentation of this workshop, and of course this took place via Zoom, and of course across all imaginable time zones. They were there at four o'clock in the morning, somehow, because the rest of us were there at midnight. And that was of course also very exciting. And yet everyone got together and presented the results.

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Andrea Iten: Yeah, it's really fascinating. Also the last interview with Lydia, which we had planned for noon, and then a lot of appointments came our way and we postponed it until early morning, and the Greek one is postponed again with the Swiss time. Then I noticed that in the morning I'm not so dewy with these interview questions. But it gives me a different connection, or other channels, or other participants who were not thought of that way at the beginning. And it begins to flow into other channels. And that's also something that is so essential to the work Magenta. There are still cups here, there are colors, but I am actually also interested in opening up other channels. With this work, as I said with Max in my first conversation, with painting over these objects or painting over the picture frames, I am somehow packing time. I give an object a new skin, and that creates another image. And that's what time is packed into; packed time. For me that is also in these pictures of women that I have collected. We have already talked about the fact that time is partly not redeemed and that it can still be redeemed. Now to your space itself here. It has this floating yellow color. How did it come to this? Would you like to tell us something about the concept?

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Anja Lutz: So now the color concept comes primarily, or also the space as it came to it. The physical space, still without yellow was actually there first. And when I was thinking about renting the space for my book design office and for the book publishing house that I also do, the question arose: What happens to this great space that then opens up to the street and which, with this great separation via the stairs, also offers itself to do something here that actually communicates with the public? Something that we as the office of the publishing house don't really need. That's actually where this idea came from: What are the things that actually move me? Where do I think I would like to see that for myself? What are the projects or the people that inspire me? And that's when what always fascinated me as a graphic designer were the graphic designers, who didn't work primarily in an applied way, but rather explored the limits of graphic design in their own experimental, personal projects. That means also where graphic design overlaps with other disciplines, be it art, performance, digital, historical research, music. What actually happens when you think graphic design further than is usually practiced? There are many, many great, exciting

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people who I have always found inspiring. There are always the people you don't see; they're not shown in the art context because they're somehow designers, of course. And they're not shown in the design institutions either, because that's how they define their *raison d'être*, which appears with the explicitly applied design.

And from this came the idea for the space to say, we offer or we create this space and show exactly these hybrid positions that fall between the chairs. And that's a lot of fun, because they're great people, or because they're exactly the people who have always inspired me. But what is also very nice is that I noticed that the response was so great and so wide and big and international and positive that I realized that it was really something - not only did I feel this gap there, it seems that many others felt the same way. There doesn't seem to be this kind of space otherwise, which refers so explicitly to it. And in thinking about how to make this room, a friend of mine had said that he would paint the floor yellow. And I was like this; yellow - that doesn't work at all - then I thought and thought about it for a long time; that could be actually also great. And then we really did some color-tests at the beginning. And the person who originally had the idea had thought more of a warm yellow. Then my partner said; if so, then a real, poisonous yellow. Then we made different room tests. Then at some point we noticed that if yellow, then it really had to be this strong yellow. And then we did that. I still had the feeling that maybe after a few months it would be too much. Maybe it is just too extreme, but I have to say it works great. I can't quite predict it yet. It is till now also not something where you think - now it becomes too much for me. Interestingly enough, what I've shown now at so many exhibitions; there were several exhibitions where people asked if we painted the floor yellow especially for this exhibition, because it always seemed to fit so perfectly. Maybe some of the designers actually react to the color in this way. Like now here where the neon pink is added as color. Maybe it wouldn't have been, is also some form of playing with it or reacting to it.

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Andrea Iten: Then I will change to the color magenta, the color that means a lot of things. What does it mean to you in your understanding of design, which has a lot to do with printed products? What does it mean to you?

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Anja Lutz: Since it is of course one of the four printing colors, i.e. magenta, cyan, blue and black. This actually has a real advantage in printing, you can use it like a spot color. It is one of the colors with which one can completely print a hundred percent unscreened area without printing a spot color. Normally you would have to use a spot color with a pantone color. But cyan, yellow and magenta are actually colors that can be used like a spot color. That's what makes it special, of course, and it's one of the primary colors from which all colors are ultimately mixed. So magenta also plays a role, just like making all the other colours in this CMYK color simulation come into being in print.

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Andrea Iten: In addition, we also want to look into the future. What do you think art needs most in these times?

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Anja Lutz: What comes to my mind most is solidarity. That is, sticking together, supporting and encouraging each other. I think that is precisely what is very important and can actually promote in such a crisis situation. Whatever I think, in my role with the room, there is also a need to continue, to continue working together, to continue showing things, to continue making a programme. We noticed this at the first events. So it was also a situation like that after a first restraint, is that already possible now? Do you want to go to an event now? And how does it feel? But actually there is also an uncanny gratitude. Oh good, you can do something again now, something is emerging again. Also a wish to manifest a certain normality almost again. We exchange ideas. Something develops. I think this is an important part.

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Andrea Iten: In my second adopted country, here in Berlin, I sense a decided attitude towards the use of public space. So I noticed that right here after Basel. Magenta is also looking for scenarios that involve our participation and thinking. DJ's on roof terraces, dancers on fallow land, gardeners around tree trunks, here in the neighbourhoods. How does this city look like for you in the future? Where are you positioning yourself? Has anything changed? Coming here from Basel, I felt something here that I had not felt in Switzerland. I think the urge of people outside to occupy the space.

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Anja Lutz: I would almost say that Berlin has perhaps always had that, or actually always has. The public space, that was simply made its own, there was little that was opposed to it. You described it with the plants that are planted along the roadside around the street trees. Those are things that have always existed, of course. Well, I don't think there was much opposition, there was always a lot of freedom to do something like that. If nobody complains, why not. I think it's just lucky that it's summer now; that a lot can actually take place outside and that you can think about what to do. Despite everything, I think so too, I must say. I also mean to feel an eerie, yet tense feeling. That sometimes perhaps even changes in such a way, or now we are doing a lot. Or where I notice that in many respects such normality has returned. But it is not normal. There is a tension underneath. I noticed it myself now with the program here. We actually said very quickly that we would now continue. But I also notice that there is something in the back of my mind, we are continuing now, who knows if we will be confronted again in autumn or winter with the phase where nothing works. So fast, fast, fast. Use this time now. Now see what we can do and now in summer a lot can of course take place outside. I find it quite interesting, one thing I had noticed. Interestingly enough, we now have advertising pillars here again. There were, then they were taken down. Now they're back. And of course there is an incredible amount of space, whether on glass containers or on construction fences, where there is simply wild billboardage. That was quite interesting, we have already put up posters here in relation to exhibitions that took place here. The problem is that these posters are already pasted over again after half an hour. Because the next one is already coming, who has already pasted something again. And now the whole thing was suddenly empty, because of course there was no event. There were no more posters, because almost all of them advertise theatre, concerts and events. Suddenly they were all empty, and I had now seen a few artistic works. Great, then we'll do something now, where suddenly these empty spaces, which were no

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longer used, were suddenly gone. And suddenly these things were hanging for weeks, because nobody had stuck them over. Yes, it's interesting that it has now become a surface that you can use.

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Andrea Iten: Magenta is your guest with coffee tableware and two pictures. What triggers this in you?

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Anja Lutz: Of course I find this colour combination, it's great of course. You really need a table like this. I also thought it was very nice how the pictures were first placed on the bookshelf, I thought that was also quite nice. They are like stories, every life is like a book. I thought it was nice how suddenly between the books, which at first glance are almost unnoticeable, because they are about the same size as a book, an art book, are also rectangular. That's what I thought, that's what these stories are, these people who fit into these books, now they're sitting next to us. Because they are all such old historical portraits, I think the question arises: what have they experienced? And with which situations were they confronted and where did they have to improvise in their lives? Dealing with such unpredictability and dealing with such unplannability? And also now, of course, here, there is also a reference to this next exhibition to think about, since they are all women. What did they also experience as women in their time? With what kind of obedience, with what conditions they lived and had to cope with.

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Andrea Iten: Yes, we will probably learn a lot from all the conversations. But you gave me a good keyword. Namely your book publications. We worked together a year ago for the book *Verbinden die Punkte - Doing Care* together with HyperWerk students. That was or has become a very haptic publication with this Affiche Paper, which is very special in your hands, with the rhythmic binding that you or we thought up together. And here I would like to ask again: How do you as a book designer handle physical aspects of the book in these digital times? Does something change or do you change? Or is there something decidedly sensual that needs to be created in these times when we meet so intensively on the screen? Or what does that trigger in you in relation to the physical books?

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Anja Lutz: For me personally, the need for the physical book, for something physical, what smells, what tastes, what feels, what I have to somehow get involved with, how physically. The one with the rhythmic binding actually had something like a game, like a trick game. Personally it appeals to me very much, I need that too. I need this physical. But I think it will change. I don't think it will disappear. A few years ago, we had already tried, with digital publications, with ebooks. It was exciting. I actually thought it was insanely great. But interestingly enough, it didn't establish itself as well as I had almost expected at the time. I think we would have made more progress today, as far as the digital book is concerned. I'm almost surprised how slowly it went, but I think in the meantime, maybe it will be a completely different form. I think what is so far contradictory to the digital is this closed format. These e-books were, after all, you had to buy them somehow. This is a closed format, somehow it contradicts the digital. The digital needs or the advantage of the digital

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is this changeability, this open; such an open system. I think that this closed book, even if you say there is still sound in it and film and moving images are still in a closed format, I think that contradicts the digital. And I think I could imagine that it would be more interesting, but I can't really grasp or define it yet. I'm actually curious, now also with this fact that digital communication has inevitably become more familiar to us and we deal with it more naturally. But I am almost curious about the situation. People say: How can we now interlock this with the real physical. And then you might say, oh yes, the digital actually makes more sense. We take over this component. The physical, the real, the analog actually makes sense there. How can they somehow interlock better? And not to see them as two separate areas. And that's where it starts to get exciting. And maybe it presupposes that we have to deal with this digital communication again, forced to do so, and then somehow look at how I can now combine it?

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Andrea Iten: Yeah, I think so too. And we are ourselves involved in a project with students worldwide about sound. And it's quite crazy how much local sounds have something in common and how different they sound again in different parts of the world. And there we have also found completely new territories, although we have been dealing with sound and tone for years and there were theoreticians in the 60s and are now back again and are recalibrating ourselves and trying to find out how we can approach each other via image, or text or places via sounds, for example, and because it is also something very, very physical and the ear is of course the interface between inside and outside, and one is actively and passively involved and that is where we are also doing research.

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Anja Lutz: Yes, I had recently made an online conference or program with designers I was friends with, and they were such simple things. And I found it quite fascinating that at some point they asked the participants to stand up and physically scan the edge of their own image, just like that. One sees oneself standing in this box and extending one's arms until one reaches the edge, above and below, or then out through the edge of the picture, more or less like optically shaking hands with someone else. And that's what I find very interesting. Suddenly you took this digital image yourself as such a physical space. I thought that's something where there's such an interesting mixing, such transitions, that could be exciting.

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Andrea Iten: Then I'm slowly coming to a conclusion. If you could contribute something to the installation Magenta in my Basel studio, integrate an object, what would you like to add or change? Would there be anything, if you had this picture in the back of your mind, these frames, this little table, would there be any idea?

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Anja Lutz: There is of course the color. It should be sulphur yellow.

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Andrea Iten: So you find something sulphur yellow could go in there.

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Anja Lutz: That would be a nice contrast.

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Andrea Iten: This is a nice ending to this conversation and I will see what can be done. I'll be very happy to take the yellow with me to Basel in the performance or with the digital camera and thank you very much for being in the room with you and for talking to you. Thank you very much and I would be happy to see you at another time.

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Anja Lutz: I thank you and all the best for the project.