

A cordial welcome on behalf of the Stiftung Buchkunst and its board.

We are pleased to have here long-standing friends and combatants for good book design as well as new ones, which established their book design competitions only in the last years. I mention China or New Zealand. Some countries re-vitalized their book contests like Belgium and we are looking forward to the foundation of the “Concours des plus beaux livres” in France, a country of an outstanding tradition in making beautiful books. Stiftung Buchkunst is proud to have given some input for this start. And still we hope to have the British Book Design, a Production Award under the participants of our “Book Art International” in the near future.

Over all the presentation of “Book Art International/Buchkunst International” is continuously growing – in number of participants as well as in quality and it is most satisfying to see during the whole Frankfurt Fair from the morning till the evening dense crowds of experts and book lovers inspecting the shelves and discussing the remarkable differences of concepts in book design in the various countries. It is exactly this notion of different approaches and the occasion to compare these which makes this exhibit so stimulating and useful.

This year we have 33 countries from four continents represented with nearly 600 books. This is a very, very small number compared with the some 400 thousand books which are on exhibit in Frankfurt. But our – your – books do represent the best traditions as well as the daring experiments of the younger generation of book designers and that makes this small selection a road sign for high quality book design and production in far broader ranges of books worldwide. All the national contests have the ambition of being a monitor as well as an educator for the book industry in their country. My guess is, that there are two terms which describe best the intention and aims of contemporary book design: **Innovation** and **Functionality**. The progress in art as well as in media techniques and educational methods demands, that book design is keeping pace with these developments and is not sticking to tradition only: that is the need of innovation.

On the other hand we see many short-lived, stylish tendencies in graphic design, which are not generally suited for books – there is always the danger of losing functionality in favour of posh design. Functionality has always to have priority over stylish outward manifestation.

Each book is therefore worth to be inspected attentively – those which represent the tradition as benchmarks and those, which show daring new concepts, materials and techniques, because they give an indication what the standards of quality production are today and how books for the future may look like.

The books of the future are in a strong competition with other media (esp. the electronic ones) or other options for using the leisure time. So the books of the future have to be attractive for the readers to come: attractive insofar as they speak the aesthetic language of their time and on the other hand thus, that they show qualities – the proprium of the books in material, concept and quality of executions. This is most important in the intermedia competition. “Books are different” and they should continue to be different, only by that they will survive. This permanent challenge of keeping the heritage and the peculiar features of the book on one side and to grasp the challenge of innovation is, what book designers try to combine and the books in this exhibition show many successful examples.

We want to thank all colleagues from the participating countries and associations for their continuous support and their enthusiasm and invite you now to stroll around to look over the books and to enjoy them. Every book here is made to enjoy your eyes, sense and intellect.

W. D. v. Lucius

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