

Hungarian University of Fine Arts
Doctoral School

The Significance of Hungarian Graphic Design Exhibitions and Competitions
in an International Context

DLA thesis

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The Topic of the Dissertation

My doctoral dissertation examines the nature of international graphic design competitions, providing a comparative analysis of the state of major Hungarian graphic design exhibitions. Hungary has a long tradition of graphic exhibitions; however, it does not have an international design competition. Although various events award international creators, the absence of international graphic competitions means that these awards are sporadic, and international attention is less focused on the Hungarian graphic community. As part of my research, I fully organized and executed an international graphic design exhibition.

The situation and significance of offline, physical space exhibitions have significantly transformed due to the rise of social media. With the advancement of online platforms, exhibitions occurring in physical spaces have gained an enhanced role in the professional community, as a large portion of professional presentation and communication has shifted to online interfaces. Through online platforms, greater visibility can be achieved in a shorter time, and this visibility can be more effectively communicated to an audience beyond the profession. Therefore, we might question the need for exhibitions that do not require an exhibition hall, as in many cases, they can be viewed in better quality online. My conclusion is that both are necessary because one supports the other, lending credibility to the creator by being present in both realities. While work displayed on online platforms has marketing value reaching globally, an exhibition strengthens the creator's professional integrity on a local level. During exhibitions, it is possible to meet other creators and professional figures (art historians, curators), thus creating a community within the profession. This aspect of offline exhibitions, the human-to-human interaction, is something online opportunities cannot replace; no 3D augmentation has yet been able to substitute for this interaction. However, it is necessary to mention that events occurring in real spaces have a significant impact on the creator's online communication, as these can be repeatedly displayed on various online platforms. This provides an opportunity to

Although numerous international competitions exist for graphic designers, my research focuses on the *Red Dot*, *A' Design Award*, and *Graphis* graphic design competitions. These are three competitions that are widely recognized by the international profession, held annually (easily accessible), and evaluate and reward numerous works submitted from various parts of the world. Among these, the Red Dot Award particularly stands out because the accolade has become a design technical standard, attracting submissions from the biggest brands and most famous designers. In contrast to the majority of Hungarian exhibitions, these competitions are not organized by non-profit organizations but by businesses, and accordingly, participation in the competition is fee-based. The three competitions examined in my dissertation employ different structures, and their services fall into various price ranges. Although the competitions are open internationally to all interested parties, the high participation fees mean that primarily the most competitive members of the profession take part. The form of recognition is digital, so the physical award or certificate must be purchased separately. Thus, it can be said that they aim to target professional members of various fields who are active and engaged in their areas.

Regarding exhibitions in Hungary, currently, there is no competition comparable to the aforementioned international awards, thus it can be concluded that Hungary currently lacks an internationally accessible design award. The oldest graphic design exhibition series, established in 1978, is the Graphic Design Biennale, formerly known as the *National Graphic Design Biennale*. At the *Graphic Design Biennale* (hereinafter referred to simply as the Biennale), foreign creators have appeared, but these were mostly by invitation, and the exhibition was not internationally advertised. However, in the year 2024, two changes occurred regarding the Biennale: for the first time, it was advertised internationally, and the exhibition was moved from Békéscsaba to Budapest, held at the

Hungarian University of Fine Arts in the Barcsay Hall. Similarly to the Biennale, the *Golden Drawing Pin* and Competition, held within the framework of *Graphifest*, is important to highlight and is similar in size, if not larger, than the Biennale. The annually held exhibition primarily awards works that were created for specific commissions or competitions, but also prominently features work from recent graduates and emerging young artists. The most similar to international competitions in Hungary is the *RGB Creative Design Award*, where visual artists can enter in eight categories against an entry fee, however, the competition is advertised only for creatives operating in (or studying in) Hungary. Among the international graphic design competitions discussed in the thesis, only one is found in the region, the *Joseph Binder Award* in Vienna, which is specifically created for graphic designers and illustrators.

My master's project, "*Ampersand 5 / Logo showcase 2024, International Logo Exhibition*," is an international graphic exhibition that opened for the fifth time in Budapest for graphic designers with the goal of showcasing Hungarian and international creators in one space. This year, the exhibition was hosted by the Association of Hungarian Fine and Applied Artists, making it the largest and most visited exhibition I have organized to date. The realization of the exhibition significantly contributed to the research work necessary for my dissertation. This allowed for the alignment of practical experiences and theoretical approaches, which were essential for achieving the research objectives and establishing the results. Integrating such a project into the research process not only contributed to my experience in planning and organization but also resulted in additional valuable data and insights through interactions and feedback from both international and local professional communities, enriching the relevance of the dissertation.