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Louis Lüthi

Research

Louis Lüthi is working on a small publication, provisionally entitled *A Die with 26 Faces*, about the use of isolated letterforms in modern literature. The narrator of *A Die with 26 Faces* is a typographer who collects books with letters for titles in order to compile an A to Z—a literary type specimen, as it were—of novels and book-length poems. His collection, which derives from a passage in James Joyce’s *Ulysses*, is framed as an ironic gesture in response to writings by various media theorists about the crisis of alphabetic, or Gutenbergian, culture and its supersession by a so-called post-literate culture of technical images. On the one hand, these alphabet books draw attention to the materiality of the printed word and therefore trace a brief and unconventional history of typography in literature since *Ulysses*; on the other, they could be seen as a portent of what Peter Sloterdijk calls “hyper-alphabetization,” inasmuch as learning how to read and write is increasingly bound up with learning how to design and publish. The publication explores many (but not all) of the alphabet books, focusing on the relation between a book’s single-letter title and its narrative, and on certain relations between the books themselves. One or two fictional titles are included in order to present additional themes or images, to provide a counterpoint to the publication’s rigid alphabetical structure.

Since Lüthi’s research project focuses on the relation between writing and typography, it naturally informs the theory classes he gives at the Graphic Design department of the [Gerrit Rietveld Academie](#). As a second-year teacher in the spring semester and a thesis advisor in the fall semester, he encourages students to view writing as a potentially integral part of their design practice, i.e., not only as a means to define their position within the field but also as a springboard for innovative forms of visual-verbal inquiry. In Lüthi’s own work, he often tries to blur the distinctions between writing, editing, and designing; consequently, the material he discovers in the course of his research will doubtless be of pedagogical use, and his teaching experience will necessarily be an influence on how he approaches his research project.

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