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## Design Research Today

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**Unfrozen – a Design Research Reader  
by the Swiss Design Network**

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*Unfrozen* versammelt eine Auswahl von Forschungsprojekten, die anlässlich der gleichnamigen Konferenz vorgestellt wurden. Unfrozen (aufgetaut) bezieht sich dabei wortwörtlich auf den Wunsch, eine warme Atmosphäre zu schaffen und das Eis zwischen Fachgrenzen und Designforschungsdisziplinen zu brechen.

Ruth Baumeister macht den Auftakt mit einem Blick zurück in die Designgeschichte: Mit dem zentralen Konflikt zwischen Max Bill und Asger Jorn werden zwei prototypische Energien der Formgebung ins Verhältnis gesetzt, die sich auch in anderen Beiträgen wiederfinden lassen.

### Weitere Autoren/Themen (Auswahl)

- Ludwig Zeller: Critical and Speculative Design
- Grace Lees-Maffeis: Kontextualisierung des Grafikdesigns
- Anna Calvera: Verortung lokaler Designpraktiken in Spanien
- Marie Heidingsfelder, Martin Luge: Future Technologies
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### Konkrete Projekte der Designforschung, z.B.:

- Lisa Mercer: Designprojekt gegen Menschenhandel
- Venanzio Arquilla Polimi, Annalisa Barbieri: Service design vs. Social innovation
- Bianca Herlo: «Community Now»
- Tomás García Ferrari: Rolle des Designs in unserer von Software geprägten Welt.
- Françoise Adler: Design-driven technology development
- Tina Moor: «Textile insulating solutions» für Gebäude bei Daniel Wehrli

Das **Swiss Design Network** vereint seit 2004 die Schweizer Hochschulen für Design und Kunst und setzt sich für eine Anerkennung und Förderung der Design-forschung auf höchstem internationalen Niveau ein.

Bis heute hat der SDN neun international anerkannte Symposien organisiert und deren Ergebnisse publiziert. Zu seinen Aufgaben gehören das Unterstützen von Workshops und Publikationen, die Nachwuchsförderung sowie die Kontaktpflege und Austausch zwischen Design-forschenden, Institutionen, Hochschulen und Industrie.

→ [swissdesignnetwork.ch/](http://swissdesignnetwork.ch/)

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Fig. 1 Asger Jorn, Spring, 1953 (Lukas Hess, © Davison-John, Silkeborg / 2018, ProLitteris, Zürich).



Fig. 2 Max Bill, circa 1940s, oil from Max Bill, die absolute Augenmaske by Erich Schenk, (courtesy Erich Schenk)



Fig. 3 HGK Ulm Complex, 1955 (photo: Ernst Hahn, © HGK Archiv / Museum Ulm).



Fig. 4 Inge Schell, Walter Gropius, and Max Bill, inauguration of HGK Ulm, 1955. Oil from Max Bill, die absolute Augenmaske by Erich Schenk, (courtesy Erich Schenk)



Fig. 5 Interior HGK Ulm, 1955 (photo: Ernst Hahn, © HGK Archiv / Museum Ulm).

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Admittedly, the idea of a cheese and a dog getting into a quarrel—as implied by the title above—is impossible and therefore requires some clarification: first of all, “Petit-Suisse” is not to be understood here as the mid-nineteenth-century French culinary invention, which can be found in supermarkets all over the world today; nor does “Grand Danois” refer to the gigantic, funny looking German dog breed that makes you wonder whether it’s actually a hound or a horse every time you encounter it. The two expressions come from a letter the Danish abstract expressionist and Situationist International artist Asger Jorn wrote to the designer and concrete artist Max Bill in the winter of 1954 (figs. 1–2). In this correspondence, the former addresses the latter as “Petit-suisse” and in the end signs it “Grand danois.” This rather humorous use of expressions marks the end of a dispute between the two men about what the old, prewar Bauhaus used to be and, subsequently, what a new, postwar one should be. Again today, only a few months ahead of the movement’s centenary, the Bauhaus pops up in various ways in both design and education contemporary discourse. Within its rather short lifespan, it represented a decisive avant-garde movement, an educational institution, a place of design and production and, last but not least, a venue for lively debates about the position of art, architecture, and design in the industrial era. Using the analogy of a crucible, the subtitle of Elaine Hochmann’s 1997 monograph *Bauhaus: Crucible of Modernism* not only hints at the heated discussions at and around the institution, but also implicitly points out the fact that, as the movement developed, its initial ideas were so deeply transformed that they either completely disappeared into or resurfaced radically changed by that melting pot.

Looking back at nearly a century of history now confirms that when the Nazis shut down the Bauhaus premises in Berlin in 1933, they simultaneously opened the door to a worldwide distribution of the movement’s ideas. Due to the emigration of its teachers and students, the Bauhaus became a global phenomenon. To name just a few examples, this exodus triggered the activities of Hannes Meyer and the Bauhaus Brigade in the USSR and Mexico. In Israel, the Bauhaus became synonymous with modern architecture through the works of its former students who resettled there. The influence of Walter Gropius at Harvard,

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Fig. 4 Asger Jorn and Marinus Achenbach, Draft for decoration, Hans Chr. Rasch Wine Shop (Denial), Copenhagen, ca. 1943 (© Marianne Andersen, Asger Jorn, Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen / 2018, ProLitteris, Zürich).



Fig. 5 Pavillon des Temps Nouveaux, Interior, Paris, 1937 (© Fondation Le Corbusier / 2018 ProLitteris, Zürich).



Fig. 9 Cobra Ceiling, Frederiksbjergsten, Bregentved, 1949 (top: Janine Jansen, © Davison-John, Silkeborg / 2018, ProLitteris, Zürich).



Fig. 10 Pavillon des Temps Nouveaux, Exterior, Paris, 1937 (© Fondation Le Corbusier / 2018 ProLitteris, Zürich).

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a clearly defined sociopolitical agenda he was ready to submit to. On the one hand, he must have been excited by the chance that Bill was given as director of a school whose proclaimed goal was nothing less than the creation of a new society. On the other, the fact that Bill was also commissioned as the architect of the premises—and for once had the creation of both form and content in his hands—must have also been inspiring. After a brief collaboration with Le Corbusier in Paris before the war, Jorn had developed a strong interest in architecture as the most public form of art, but his repeated efforts to collaborate and experiment with Danish architects during the 1940s were of limited success (figs. 6–7). Having been educated as a teacher himself, his fascination with Ulm as a pedagogical experiment comes as no surprise, so it’s understandable that he immediately wrote a letter to Max Bill, enclosing some samples of his works from the Cobra period, offering his services.

Despite the fact that Bill and Jorn were both from the same generation, the radically different directions they took as artists makes a collaboration sound like an odd match. When Jorn asked Bill if he might join the HGK, the latter was already an acclaimed artist, curator, editor, and member of various international associations, while Jorn was a no-name artist, with financial problems and a rather desolate private life. Both had learned a profession—Bill trained as a silversmith, and Jorn as a school teacher—before following their true vocation as artists. Both were fascinated by the Bauhaus: “The Bauhaus became for me the epicenter, with its overlapping of disciplines and its insistence that in everything we design we have a personal responsibility towards a society or, as the later formulation had it, the whole environment created by us, from the spoon to the city, had to be brought into harmony with social conditions, which implied shaping those conditions too,” Bill (1976) confessed retrospectively. While Bill himself had studied at the Bauhaus in Dessau, Jorn’s experience was second hand. He had encountered the movement through its publications, which he carefully studied as a young fellow at the Silkeborg library and which finally led him to travel to Paris, with the intention of studying with Wassily Kandinsky in the mid-1930s. Experiencing Paris, center of the avant-garde arts at that time, played a decisive role for both. Bill had traveled there during a study trip back in