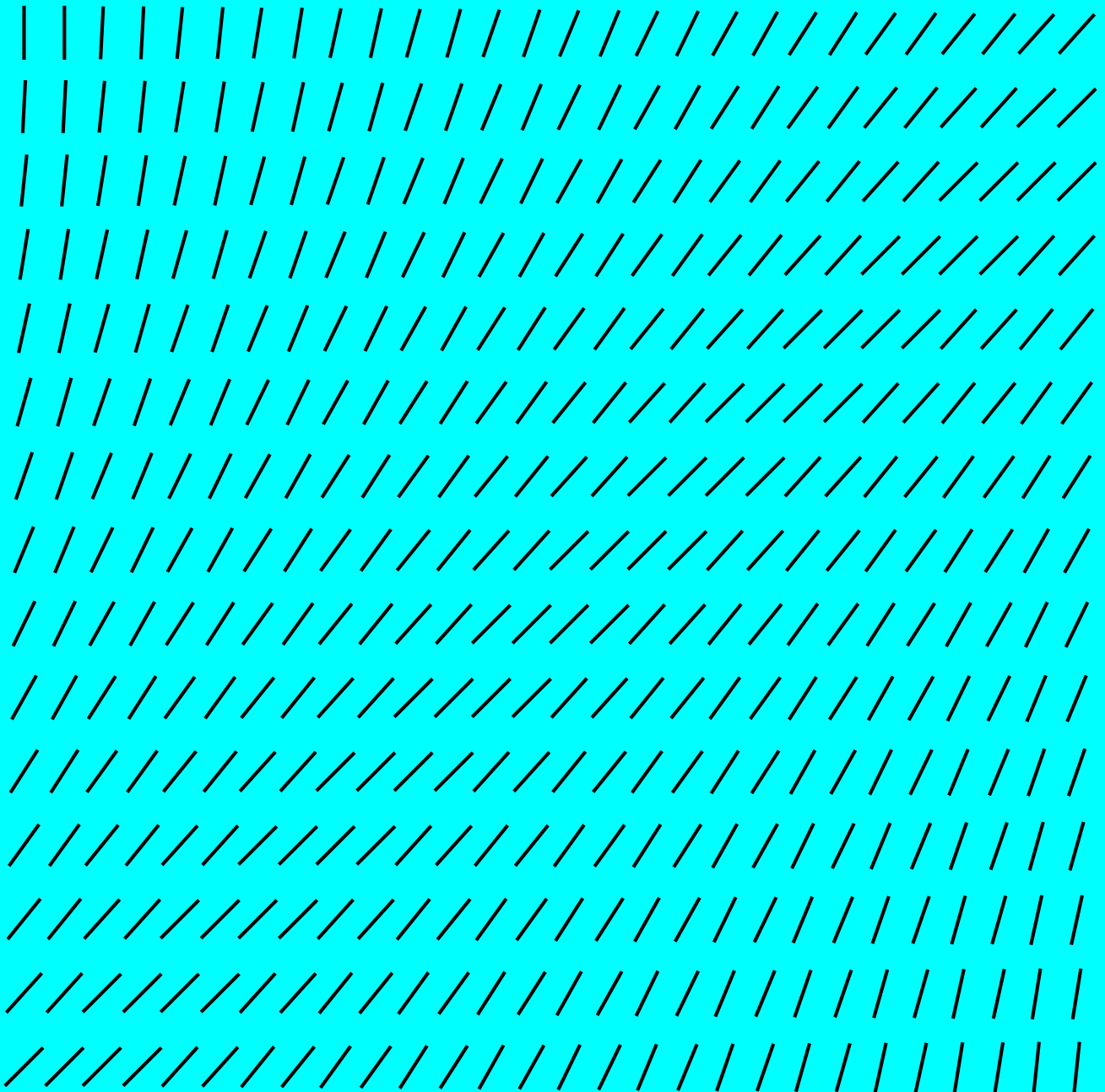


# Graphic Design in Turkey

Version 2019  
Written by Sadik Karamustafa



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In 2011, SICA (the predecessor of DutchCulture) produced a comprehensive mapping of the Turkish cultural field. This mapping was written by local experts and edited by Teike Asselbergs and Chantal Hamelinck. The mapping was produced as a means to promote cultural exchange between the Netherlands and Turkey and as a starting point of the year 2012, which marked 400 years of Dutch – Turkish diplomatic relations. The mapping was supported and produced in close co-operation with the Dutch public funds.

An update of these mappings was commissioned in 2018 by DutchCulture while working with the same editors. The existing mappings were revised and several new mappings were added. The updated mappings are focusing more on giving Dutch cultural practitioners an insight into the Turkish cultural field and its infrastructure, and helping them get in contact with colleagues.

*This mapping is supported by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science of the Netherlands.*

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# I Summary


It would be fair to say there is no real awareness among the Turkish public about graphic design. Instead of speaking about an “audience” for graphic design, we can speak about “users”, as graphic design does not have a specific audience like that of the plastic arts, performance arts or cinema. In essence, the aim of graphic design is to maximise and spread an intended message, being solely a professional domain. In Turkey, one rarely comes across educational activities or organisations such as hobby clubs for amateurs in the field.

In the past, the understanding of a graphic design exhibition in galleries was often as follows: the work by a designer or several designers on completely different subjects would be exhibited next to one other. Today this perception has slowly changed, and in curated exhibitions work is now chosen and exhibited based on a contextual relationship.

Unlike some developed countries, Turkey does not have institutions such as design centres, design museums or design galleries that support the understanding of the importance of design for society. Graphic design exhibitions reach their audiences in spaces that perform various other functions, such as culture centres, art museums and university lecture halls. The number and quality of these spaces have improved considerably since the 2000s.

In the 1920s, during the early years of the Turkish Republic, the government provided grants for international education, thereby training people who would then support the development of the country. As time passed, the public support of human resources in the fields of visual arts and design declined, and in recent years this has come to a halt.

As a result of governmental policies and the profit-making ambitions of the private sector, the quality of education at universities has declined. In this way, graphic design education has also been adversely affected. As in the rest of the world, the 2000s were the beginning of a fast and profound period of change for graphic design in Turkey. In particular, the technological, economical and societal developments that have taken place since the 2010s have had a major impact on graphic design and graphic design education.



Since 2013, as a result of the wars taking place on Turkey's border, terrorist attacks and the problem of migration, Turkey began to move away from Europe, and fewer graphic design students have come to Turkey through the Erasmus programme. In this period of crisis, most of the graphic designers who were invited to graphic design events in Turkey did not accept the invitation, afraid that something bad would happen. In the past few years, students from the Middle East, Iran, Russia and Greece no longer attend the Grafist event, which is organised by Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University as a regional design education event.

Although Turkish graphic designers and graphic design education groups have come to a point where they are seemingly "cut off from the world", as a result of new technological innovations, young designers especially are building new tunnels to reach the world. With the opportunities created by new media, mobile phone and tablets, there is hardly a destination left they cannot reach.

# I Introduction

In the 2010s, Turkey has seen important changes in the society. Political fluctuations, steps backward in democracy, limitations on intellectual freedom, wars erupting in various parts of the world including around Turkey, terrorist attacks, an attempted coup and an economic crisis have all left their mark. However, despite these negative events, life goes on.

In 2011, I wrote an article on graphic design in Turkey for the SICA (Institute for International Cultural Policy) cultural mapping project organised as part of the celebrations of 400 years of diplomatic relations between Turkey and the Netherlands. Besides a short history of graphic design in Turkey, under various headers I tried to give information about the contemporary situation. Within the limits of my professional and academic knowledge, my aim was to write a text that would satisfy blog readers. In the article, I wrote that with only a few exceptions, graphic design is not a subject that attracts the attention of researchers and critics in our country. This has not changed; in 2011, there was no elaborate analysis available specifically focusing on contemporary Turkish design, and there still isn't.

Both in society and in nature everything changes continuously. As a discipline of communication, graphic design also changes depending on technological, economic and sociological developments. In his book "The Education of a Graphic Designer", edited by Steven Heller and published in the early 2000s, the designer and academic Chris Pullman made a list of things that change but also do not change in graphic design: "In the past decade, we have witnessed a series of amazing changes in the way we think about the profession of graphic design. Here is my short list:

- Once graphic design meant flat, static, two-dimensional. Now it encompasses multiple, hybrid media. It is not just visual, but involves a variety of the senses, more like life itself, which plays out in a four-dimensional world.
- Once what you were making was an object. Now it is more often an experience.
- Once the designer's art was composition. Now it is choreography.
- Once the profession was genetically linked to the ancient crafts of hand typesetting, bookbinding, drawing, and cutting. Now it no longer is so physical, mediated by technology that can make it feel almost virtual.

- Once it was possible to assume that there was one language (yours), one culture, one set of meanings. Now “mass communications”, which were based on that notion, have given way to targeted communications; broadcast shifts to narrow-cast; one-to-many becomes many-to-one. And the visual and verbal language of the end user is almost certainly different from your own.
- Once most of us did piecework, making a new thing to fit within a small universe of other things. Now, while piecework won’t disappear, the new focus is on strategy: design as strategic planning, design as a business resource. This implies a different level of thinking and participation, even a different vocabulary.
- Once design didn’t have much conscious history. You just did it. Now we have a history and people are actually writing about.”
- We can place “In Turkey” in front of every “once” on Pullman’s list of changes that I partially quoted. These changes, not only mentioned by an American writer, but also based on experience in both the US and other developed countries, are valid for any geography that works on graphic design. In the age of globalism, everything happens everywhere at the same time.

Now let’s take a look at the unchanging basic features of graphic design in Pullman’s list:


**“Design is different from art.** Someone who becomes a successful painter or sculptor or performance artist is likely to be a person who derives their energy and intellectual satisfaction from solving problems that come from inside themselves. In contrast, someone who ends up as a successful designer is probably a person whose energy and intellectual satisfaction come from solving someone else’s problems.

**Design isn’t necessarily a pro-social profession.** The seeming pro-social acts of facilitating communication, providing access to ideas and promoting understanding don’t necessarily assure a positive outcome. It depends on what the message is. Throughout one’s professional life, the key decision is: Which problems will you use your skill to help solve?

**Graphic design has its roots in language.** Graphic design is unique among all design disciplines because of its deep roots in language. Graphic communications rely on the interaction of words and images to convey a message that is almost always dependent on language and its cultural context. As a consequence, the heart of a graphic design practice is typography, a set of conventions that allows us to represent, however crudely, the rich inflections and rhythms of spoken language.

**The visual power of design derives from the idea of contrast.** If you ask why something works and you push back far enough, eventually everything seems to be based on contrast: the ability to distinguish one thing from another. Composition, sequencing, even legibility all rely on devices that affect the contrast between things. Contrast seems to control many of the phenomena essential to visual communication: grouping things into families, creating theme and variation, establishing hierarchies and providing interest.

**Nothing happens out of context.** Few things we make have no precedent. It is important to understand how one thing fits into the larger family of things to which it belongs. You can’t enjoy the variation if you don’t know the theme.



**The goal of design education is resourcefulness.** A good education is one that gives you the resourcefulness to solve the problem you haven't anticipated. It should provide experiences that give you the ability to express yourself in a variety of media. And with the inevitability of change in both the tools and the scope of design, it should probably keep focusing back on the fundamental mechanisms that control what makes an experience authentic, accessible, and understandable."

While the what, why, when and how much may change, the basic characteristics of graphic design do not. The limits between different design disciplines have become more fluid, but this situation does not make graphic design and the other design fields less independent.



# Short history

According to some resources, the history of Turkish graphic design dates back to the establishment in 1726 of the printing press by Ibrahim Müteferrika, who printed in Ottoman Turkish with Arabic letters. Some other resources take this even further back in history, and believe it started with the establishment of a printing press in Hebrew letters in the multicultural Ottoman Empire. If we take this into account, we can briefly summarise the history of graphic design in Turkey as follows:

In 1493, the first printing press was established in Istanbul by Sephardic Jews David and Samuel Nahmias, who were expelled from Spain. They printed in the Ladino language (Spanish Hebrew) and used the Hebrew writing system. The first book published at this printing house was the *Arba'ah Turim*.

In 1567, Tokatlı Apkar Tibir established the first printing press in Armenian, with Armenian letters. Apkar Tibir had brought the Armenian letters from Venice, and the first book he printed was "Easy Armenian Alphabet".

In 1627, the first printing press printing in Greek, with Greek letters, started operating. The Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Istanbul brought the machine and equipment from London, and the founder of this printing press was Nikodemus Metaksas.

In 1729, the first book published in Ottoman Turkish, in the Arabic alphabet, was "Vankulu Lügati". The preparations for the establishment of this printing press began in 1726 by Çelebizade Mehmet Sait Efendi and Ibrahim Müteferrika, when they received permission from the sultan at the time, Bayezid II.

In the 19th century, the first newspapers and magazines were printed, and in the second half of the century important developments happened in printing and publishing.

In 1882, the first art and design educational institution was established, "Sanayi-i Nefise-i Ali Osman". In the first half of the 20th century, this school was renamed the Academy of Fine Arts, now the Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University.

In the 1920s, Sabiha Bozcalı, Kenan Temizan and İhap Hulusi received education in Germany for the first time on design.

In 1927, the department of decorative arts was established at the Academy of Fine Arts. The Poster Workshop was set up, and the Austrian Erik Weber taught in this department.

In 1928, the government decided on an alphabet change. Turkish was now written in the Latin alphabet instead of the Arabic one. Use of the Arabic script was forbidden.

In the 1930s and 1940s, German scientists and artists taught both at Istanbul and Ankara University, as well as at the Academy of Fine Arts.

In 1957, the School of Applied Fine Arts was established, teaching graphic design, decorative design, textile and decorative painting.

In the 1960s, the number of advertising agencies increased in parallel with the new industry and trade developments. The agencies became an important place to work for educated graphic designers.

In 1968, the Graphic Artists Association was established by Mengü Ertel, Sait Maden and Yurdaer Altıntaş, but this association soon closed down.

In 1978, GMK (Association of Graphic Designers in Turkey) was established. In 1981, they began yearly graphic design exhibitions, which have continued annually.

In the 1980s, in parallel with the rest of the world, the field of Turkish graphic design met with computers.

The first important event abroad for Turkey was the "Posters from Turkey" exhibition held in Toronto (1992), Duisburg (1993), New York (1994) and Tel Aviv (1997).

In 1995, GMK became a member of Icograda (International Council of Graphic Design Associations). In 1997, as part of Icograda's design education local collaboration programme, the pilot project Grafist/Istanbul Graphic Design Week started, and has been organised yearly ever since.

In 1997, a Turkish graphic designer, Sadık Karamustafa, was chosen as a member of the prestigious international graphic design organisation AGI (Alliance Graphique International). In the following years, Bülent Erkmen, Yurdaer Altıntaş and Mehmet Ali Türkmen also became members of AGI.

In 2012, the Istanbul Design Biennial was organised for the first time, and celebrated its fourth year in 2018. The difference with previous design events is that this is a curated event.

In 2013, the Graphic Design Research and Applications Centre was established at the Mimar Sinan Fine Art University.

# | Main trends and topics

The Arabic Spring, Syrian refugees, terrorist attacks, an economic crisis, the Gezi Park protests, the Academics for Peace petition, the end of discussions to peacefully solve the Kurdish issue, the July 15, 2016 attempted coup d'état, freedom of speech, climate change and environmental issues, elections, referendums, a change of regime... This is only a selection of the topics that have been keeping Turkey busy in the 2010s. Graphic design is a mirror of modern societies; a mirror does not have its own agenda, but reflects what is happening in front of it.

Graphic design is a communication discipline. In countries that lack freedom of expression, it makes no sense to talk about trends in graphic design. Today the most important trend in the world is "post-truth". According to this, what is real has no importance, lies are mixed with reality, and good with evil. Whatever people want to believe in becomes "the truth". The world has entered the post-truth age. If we ignore this, then we will not be able to understand the world, or Turkey. Communication is not always positive and beneficial. In today's Turkey, the importance of international trends regarding graphic design is overlooked or ignored in the mass media. Communication is ruled by one source, all newspapers use the same headlines, television only shows propaganda by the regime, and especially during election times, this is a country where advertising agencies make strategic decisions on which messages are conveyed to which voter and how they are conveyed. The word now belongs to propaganda. In an environment in which lies and short-term gains prevail, graphic design has become one of the tools used to distort reality.

# | Popular

It would be fair to say there is no real awareness among the Turkish public about graphic design. Individuals of a society consume graphic design. They read newspapers, books and magazines, they buy products by looking at labels, and try to find their way by looking at traffic signals and navigation tools, but it never crosses their minds that all these images, text, logos, moving and stationary visual communication messages have been specifically designed by someone. This is of no interest.

To familiarise the public with graphic design, the Graphic Design Association has been organising exhibitions and publishing books since 1978. Still, to create this awareness a serious long-term project is needed. The public generally sees graphic designers as “artists”. A reader may be interested in a book because of its cover, but buys the book not for its cover, but for its content. No one looks for the name of the designer on the copyright page of a book. According to blog author (Manifold Press) and designer Esen Karol, today we can speak about “users” of graphic design instead of an “audience”.

# | Audiences


Graphic design does not have a specific audience in the same way that the plastic arts, performance arts or cinema do. A poster may grab the attention of someone walking along the street who is interested in theatre or concerts; they will look at the poster and read its information. If there is a performance that appeals, they may buy a ticket. In this process, the poster, and thus the graphic design, has done its job. This potential spectator is no longer interested in the poster, but in the performance. However, if they are interested in graphic design – and this happens rarely – they may want to know who the graphic designer is. Just as in the rest of the world, this is also valid in Turkey. This is the reason why graphic designers are generally not well known by the general public. Two stars of the graphic design world in the 1990s, Neville Brody in the UK and David Carson in the US, are hardly even known by students of graphic design, let alone by the general public. I asked a friend from France about some “famous” graphic designers who had exhibitions at the Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University as part of Grafist, and who are quite well established in Turkey, and he did not know them.

The primary task of graphic design is to convey information – perhaps to convince an audience to buy products, to influence and to reflect the identity of those giving the message. Only when this task has been completed does the story of the designer begin. We can call this the second life of graphic design, and from here on the design is disconnected from its function. If the process of the design of the poster, logo, book and its cover, or illustration has an interesting story, then exhibitions and books may be made, articles appear in magazines, and if it is deemed of value it may be added to a museum collection.

In 2018, one of Turkey’s leading graphic designers, Bülent Erkmen, developed a new form of communication with the audience by bringing together the works of different subjects within different contexts, with an understanding that went beyond the previous self-promotional exhibitions and portfolio publications:

In this exhibition, he “remixed” his works. He marked the exhibition of this restatement with the “pin” he designed for Turkish author Sevim Burak’s books. He mixed the already-exhibited old works with new works in a different context and re-staged them.

He set up the exhibition on two floors of the venue, inside labyrinthine walls and exhibited his works from the early 1970s until today, following a non-chronological,



personal line of narrative. Each work in the exhibition has its own reason for existence. Through new associations deriving from these causes for existence, he created “urban neighbourhoods”. All made in different times for different reasons, these works became the residents of these neighbourhoods.

Erkmen wanted to build a very congested, complex structure, so much so that a number of nooks and corners couldn't accommodate more than one person. He cares deeply about this state of getting lost, this state of internal congestion. It's not an exhibition composed of works lined up neatly side by side for people to enjoy in a relaxed manner. He didn't want to make the audience feel comfortable. As one walks through the labyrinthine corridors, one encounters the sounds and visions of different times. In a sense, the city's streets echo with sounds, humming, spoken words, music. As one moves away from a particular sound, another sound or image fades in. He also curated a series of talks running concurrently with the exhibition, under the main heading of “Renewal Through Repetition: REMIX”, addressing various topics in graphic design, music, contemporary arts, architecture, industrial design and cinema.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>  
Interview with Bülent Erkmen,  
September 2018

# | Sub-disciplines

Graphic designers in Turkey come together through GMK (Association of Graphic Designers in Turkey). As an international organisation, GMK ICO-D (its previous name was ICOGRADA – International Council of Graphic Design Association) began its activities in 1995. Anyone wishing to get in touch with graphic designers in Turkey can contact GMK, while anyone interested in the history of Turkish design can get in touch with the 4T Turkey Graphic Design History Society of the Graphic Design Research and Applications Centre at the Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University. For illustrators, contact the Association of Illustrators (<https://theaoi.com/>).

# | Professional groups and organisations

GMK (Association of Graphic Designers in Turkey) was established in 1979. It provides various services and guidance for its members. There have been yearly exhibitions with winning graphic designs since 1981. GMK publishes books, organises seminars, gives advice to associations that wish to organise competitions related to graphic design and provides jury member support. The association also informs its members on laws and working principles.



# | Educational institutions

In 2018, there were more than 200 public and private universities in Turkey. The quality of universities keeps declining due to governmental policies and the private sector's focus on profit. Education on graphic design is also affected by this unfortunate situation. With only a few exceptions, all universities have opened a department for graphic design. Public schools are increasing the number of students accepted to these programmes every year. There are not enough good quality teachers to answer this fast-growing market demand, and no contemporary education curriculum is being created. Professors or associate professors who retire from public universities move to private universities. Some of the graphic design departments at public universities had to close their master's programmes because there were not enough instructors available. Despite these negative factors affecting graphic design education, the graphic design department of Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University trained young teachers as part of a long-term programme and managed to increase the quality of education, as well as its variety. In 2011, this young teaching staff began to teach in their own field of specialisation. This new situation shows that the "master-apprentice" way of education, where professional designers also teach, is coming to an end, and that a period has begun with academics whose only profession is to educate.

Marmara, Anadolu, Dokuz Eylül, Hacettepe and Sabancı University are also institutions that attach importance to maintaining a high level of education in visual communication design.

The Graphic Design Department of Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University was placed in Europe's Top 100 Architecture and Design Schools in a guide in the December 2013 edition of Domus magazine. The department was on this list until 2016. The schools listed in the guide were chosen based on the inclusion of networks of reputable institutions, use of new technology and equipment, international relations, collaboration with the industry, and the professional work of graduates. This guide aims to help students wishing to study abroad or participate in an exchange programme find the most suitable programme. It allows students to compare each school's features in terms of curriculum focus, pedagogical identity and educational environment.

With regards to exhibitions, art galleries that are part of Hacettepe, Marmara and Anadolu University have started to exhibit poster collections.

# | Non-professionals

The field of graphic design is not suitable for non-professional work. Non-professionals can create sculptures, music, ceramics, glass or textile, and there are organisations and educational institutions in Turkey that support these kinds of works. However, it does not make much sense for a non-professional to spend their free time creating a poster, logo, brochure or press release, printing it and then distributing it. In essence, the aim of graphic design is to spread the intended message, and it is a fully professional domain. In Turkey one rarely comes across educational activities or organisations such as hobby clubs for amateurs.

The one exception is calligraphy. Calligraphy (*hüsn-ü hat*) is both a traditional art form in Turkey and a component of graphic design. While calligraphy was very common before the alphabet change, the move to the use of the Latin alphabet in Turkish has meant that today it continues in a more limited capacity. There are also organisations for non-professionals who work on Ottoman calligraphy, and education in Ottoman calligraphy is still taught at Traditional Turkish Art departments of some universities.

In primary and secondary schools in Turkey, not enough time is spent on art and design. Even if it is on the teaching programme, painting is favoured, and the subject of design is hardly touched on. Some private institutions and local governments try to contribute to art and design education at schools. Each year the municipality of Nilüfer in Bursa chooses an “author of the year”, always someone who has recently died, and organises events highlighting the works of this author. As part of this project, there is a book cover design competition of one of the author’s books for secondary school students.

Creative initiatives at schools are usually tied to the limitations of the Ministry of National Education, board of education and discipline. In 2010, Istanbul was chosen as the European Capital of Culture together with Essen in Germany and Budapest in Hungary. As part of the capital of culture programme, Essen organised music and graphic design projects for children. Collaborating with primary schools, they established a percussion orchestra with the participation of hundreds of children. Small drums from cheap materials were manufactured and distributed to schools and the young students were asked to design a poster to wrap around the drum. The children worked together with their teachers and made these posters. On a sunny Sunday in May, hundreds of children gave a concert by creating a large percussion orchestra with colourful texts and illustrations. The people from Essen wanted to organise a similar event in Turkey. They agreed with a school in Istanbul, but because of bureaucratic and financial obstacles the project could not be carried out. “European Capital of Culture” Istanbul hardly had any activities on its programme for children and young adults.

# Venues

Unlike many other countries, Turkey does not have institutions such as design centres, design museums or design galleries that support the understanding of the importance of design for society. Graphic design exhibitions reach their audiences in spaces that perform different functions such as culture centres, art museums and university halls. The number and quality of these spaces have improved considerably since the 2000s.

Graphic design performs a communication function in various media such as print and publishing vehicles, product packaging, billboards and digital media. At this stage the designer is invisible; what is important is the message of the work.

After their work is completed on posters, book covers, corporate identity elements, illustrations and in media, the designs move to different dimensions. They appear in exhibitions, in journals and books. Some works take their place as a document in exhibitions and publications created for other purposes. These are the kinds of events where graphic design and the designer express themselves, or where they are used as an example for an idea or thought. For example, movie posters are shown in a research exhibition on cinema, or election posters are published in a book investigating democracy. It also happens that exhibitions with design portfolios are organised.

Some countries have galleries, museums and cultural centres dedicated to graphic design. From institutions such as the Galerie Anatome in Paris, the Essen Poster Museum and the Ginza Graphic Gallery (GGG) in Tokyo, we can give an example of a museum on printing and typography in almost every developed country.

However, there is no venue in Turkey that only exhibits graphic design. Spaces in universities, private or public institutions can be reserved for graphic design exhibitions. The main venues opening graphic design exhibitions are SALT Culture and Research, Marmara University Museum, Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University, Anadolu University, Istanbul Chamber of Architects and Akbank Art.

# Festivals and events

**The Istanbul International Graphic Design Week** (Grafist) has been organised every year since 1997 from a collaboration among Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University, Department of Graphic Design and GMK (Association of Graphic Designers in Turkey). Grafist's programme consists of seminars, exhibitions, workshops and broadcasts, and from the beginning has been attended by designers, teachers and students from both Turkey and the rest of the world. Since 2009, the graphic design department of Anadolu University in Eskişehir has organised a calligraphy and typography event. Invited speakers present their current works to an audience of students, designers, artists and academics from all over the country. Workshops on calligraphy and typography are held and students from Anadolu University and other guest universities gather to learn more on their field.

**ISType** (Istanbul Typography Seminars) brings together students, academics and industry professionals to discuss issues in typography, current innovations in the field and areas for growth in the future. The main objective is to establish a theoretical framework to learn the origins of typography and to understand where it is heading. A series of talks and applied workshops is led by nationally and internationally renowned typographers, calligraphers and scholars. ISType is organised with the help of its educational partner Sabancı University. The series was created in 2011 as an annual event, but since 2013 it has been held biennially. ISType Mono organises a single keynote speech in the years when there is no main conference.

**Yahşibey Design Workshops** in Izmir provide an environment to encourage young designers who study different design disciplines at university to use their creativity and have fun working together. The idea is simple: every summer ESTV invites the best students in design disciplines from Turkey and abroad for working periods of 15 days with professional designers. The students and their project leader stay at Yahşibey, where they cook and clean up together, have fun and, of course, work on a design project assigned by the professional designer. They present the result of their joint labour at the end of the period and deliver it to the foundation. Their contribution is turned into a website and a book. To participate as a student in the Yahşibey Design Workshops, an email must be sent, mentioning the period they are interested in. In addition, a project must be presented to the project leader, who will then decide on who is chosen. Yahşibey Design Workshops is a non-profit event and participants do not pay any fees.

Graphic design education in Izmir, the third largest city of Turkey, has a history of more than 44 years, and the number of relevant departments is now more than 10. The yearly events organised by nearly every university add a vibrancy to the city. The local government claims they are a city of design and support the creation of many projects such as the Good Design Izmir events organised by the Izmir Mediterranean Academy; the 4T – Design and Design History Society conferences; and PechaKucha Nights and Good Design Days organised by Nobon Design under the label #Izmirdeoluyor.

The efforts of the 87-year-old Izmir International Fair, which resulted in design productions around Kültürpark in Izmir, and Originn Coworking, a centre focusing on design, have meant there are design clusters on the periphery of the city. This conglomeration has taken the city to a different level in terms of design. In general, it can be said that the art and design world in Izmir has become a stage for more impressive events every day, and graphic design is part of these developments.

The International Istanbul Design Biennial organised by the Istanbul Foundation for Culture and Arts (IKSV) was first organised in 2012. The biennial covers areas such as architecture, interior design, industrial products, graphics and new media.

# | Prizes and grants

There is no public support for the professional and academic development of graphic designers. In the 1920s, the early years of the Turkish Republic, the government provided grants for international education to train people who would then support the development of the country. As the years passed, the public support of human resources in the fields of visual arts and design declined, and in recent years this has come to a halt. Occasionally, there have been various supporting activities by non-public institutions.

In 2011, the graphic designer Yurdaer Altıntaş received the “Artist Honour Award” for his 60 years of work. This award is given out every year as part of the Istanbul Art Fair, and this was the first time it was given to a graphic designer. Some of the designer’s works were displayed in an exhibition at the fair, and a catalogue titled “Yurdaer Altıntaş Works of Graphic Design, 1952-2011” was published. The publication, based on the idea of catalogue raisonné, contained a chronological overview of the designer’s works from his archives. More important, the Tüyap organisation, well known for organising art fairs, bought Altıntaş’ original graphic designs, as well as his illustrations, thereby adding works of design to their art collection.

Celebrating the 40th anniversary of their founding in 2019, the GMK/Association of Graphic Designers in Turkey organises a yearly graphic design exhibition and gives awards to those pieces in the exhibition considered most successful. Besides the GMK Success Awards granted to design in 20 different areas, some private monetary awards offered by several organisations help motivate designers working in these fields. The most significant award is for the Best Student Work, granted on behalf of Biker Özsunay, who died in a traffic accident in 1993 while he was a graphic design student at Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University.

There are several institutions that support GMK’s work, such as the Consulate General of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Istanbul, which supports the events organised as part of the International Istanbul Design Days Grafist, organised by Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University’s Graphic Design Department.

# | Financial situation

Until the 2000s, graphic designers learning on the job worked in large and small advertising agencies, earning good money. Conventional advertising agencies quickly lost their importance due to the rapid development of new media technologies. One by one they had to close their doors. To cut costs, they exploited newly graduated students by making them work long periods as unpaid interns. This exploitation continues today. Expert commentators said that the market is dominated by media production companies. In the 2010s, smartphones and revolutionary technological tools disrupted the advertising market; both graphic design education and its application shifted in scope. Even designers who began their professional work in the 2000s and are now aged between 35 and 40 years complain about being technologically behind. Young designers who master the new technologies create moving, interactive work and are successful at designing video games, thus participating in the market with their fresh ideas.

# | Critics and researchers

- Dilek Bektaş (history of graphic design), author of *Bir Meşk Gibi*, a monography of graphic designer Mengü Ertel, 2011, and *Türkiye Grafik Tasarım Kronolojisi*, 2016.
- Bülent Tanju (architect, historian on architecture) wrote articles on design disciplines for *Manifoldpress*, 2017-2019.
- Burcu DüNDAR (designer, academic) – author of “*Kitap Nesnesi, Nesne Olarak Kitap*”, 2012.
- Melike Taşçıoğlu (designer, academic) – author of “*Bir Görsel İletişim Platformu Olarak Kitap*”.
- T. Fikret Uçar (designer, academic), author of “*Görsel İletişim ve Grafik Tasarım*”.
- Esen Karol (designer, academic), wrote articles and reports for *Manifoldpress*, *Jeff Talks*, 2017-2019.
- Onur Yazıcıgil (researcher, typography designer)
- Ömer Durmaz (designer, academic), author of “*İstanbul’un 100 Grafik Tasarımcısı ve İllüstratörü*”, 2010.

Seven of the eight people on this list who have contributed to the field of research on graphic design are designers and one is an architect. Nearly all those in Turkey who work on research on graphic design and literature have studied graphic design, taught graphic design and are professional designers. In 2013, the Graphic Design Department of Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University recommended adding courses in the history of design to the Art History Department, but this was rejected.



# | Social media

The monthly “Grafik Tasarım Üzerine Yazılar” (Articles on Graphic Design), a four-page, A3-format publication by the GMK (Association of Graphic Designers in Turkey) and managed by Osman Tülü, has reached its 200th edition. The publication concept of the articles belongs to Bülent Erkmén. In the first editions, only translated articles were published. In later editions, more and more articles and interviews by local designers were added.


In mainstream media circles, there is no newspaper on graphic design. The last edition of the only magazine on graphic design, Grafik Tasarım, was published in 2012. The advertising and marketing magazine Media Cat, which started its publication in the 1990s, regularly gives space to graphic design.

In social media, Jeff Talks has the most serious publications on graphic design with the weekly Manifoldpress. He publishes audio interviews with experts in the fields of graphic design, culture, art and sciences on subjects such as the city, architecture, product design and the environment.

Jeff Talks is a series of public talks organised four times a year. Invited speakers are “cultural practitioners”, who either invent unfamiliar ways to approach the familiar or follow familiar steps to pursue the unfamiliar.

Developed by graphic designer Esen Karol and architectural historian Bülent Tanju, with the assistance of graphic designer Johannes Buch in 2010, Jeff Talks was titled after the 12 Jeff folding chairs that fit into the only space in Karol’s studio suitable for presentations with a projector. With a growing interest over time, Jeff Talks first moved to ARK Kültür, which housed more Jeff chairs, then to Studio-X Istanbul, and eventually became a Manifold event in 2016. Each Jeff Talks is recorded and shared online. For each Jeff Talks an individual poster is designed and at each Jeff Talks a specially baked cake is served with coffee.

In the summer of 2018, Manifold organised in collaboration with SALT “Jeff Talks Back to Back” over a period of four weeks. It comprised an exhibition of the Jeff Talks posters by 32 designers, five workshops, a series of back-to-back presentations by 23 graphic designers, two Jeff Talks and screenings of previous talks at SALT Beyoğlu.



Manifold is an independent publishing project, co-founded by Esen Karol and Bülent Tanju in 2016. Now two years old, Manifold serves as a platform to consider questions of urbanism, design, art and politics primarily within the Turkish context. The main focus of Manifold is the Turkish-language online journal with the same name. With around 200 contributors, the journal publishes fresh content – a text, visual essay, video or a podcast – every day and is being read all over the world. Series such as “Design in the Netherlands” or “What designers collect?” are Manifold productions, which are designed to encourage designers to write. Manifold also publishes books and posters, while planning to publish games, music and fonts. Besides Jeff Talks, which is a regular Manifold event, there are also special get-togethers at exhibitions, workshops, panel discussions and modest exhibitions organised by Manifold, as part of a continuing effort to bring designers physically together.

# Resources

## **Istanbul Press Media Museum**

Address: Divanyolu Caddesi, Çemberlitaş Istanbul

For printing tools and documents on the history of printing in Turkey.

## **Istanbul University Communication Museum**

Tools for communication and documents.

## **PTT Museum, Ankara**

Collection of communication tools, archive of Turkish postage stamps.

## **Marmara University Republic Museum, Istanbul**

Archive of İhâp Hulusi Görey, designer (1896-1986).

## **Mimeray Ofset, Istanbul**

Erol Ağakay, printer, photographer and designer of more than 3,000 film posters.

## **Turkey Advertising Foundation, Istanbul**

Library and archive on the advertising sector.

## **Türvak Cinema, TV and Theatre Museum, Istanbul**

For a collection of Turkish cinema and theatre posters.

# Facilities

All major cities in Turkey have many kinds of facilities for graphic design practice. It is possible to find copy shops and digital print workshops not only in urban centres, but also in middle-sized towns offering services for printing in any size. Most of the offset printing houses and binding studios in major cities are equipped with advanced machines. It is also possible to find small printing presses and engravers that offer letter-press printing, embossing, folding, perforation and numerator printing.

Large and small stationery shops sell all kinds of imported art and design application materials.

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