Common Characters: GRANSHAN Talks & Ceremony in Reading

A short review by Antje Dohmann about the event on 17 June on-site at the Typographic Departement of the University of Reading and online on YouTube

17 June 2024

A (Typo) Day Among Friends
A short review by Antje Dohmann

Exciting talks, inspiring discussions and the announcement of the winners of the 13th GRANSHAN Type Design Competition – Common Characters: GRANSHAN Talks & Ceremony at the University of Reading on June 17 was a complete success for the 50 or so participants live on site and many more online on YouTube.

The original lava lamps, which were the inspiration for the event's key visual, almost stole the show from the gold-colored megaphones with the inscription GIVE VOICE TO TYPE. But only almost. After all, the megaphones are now coveted awards that you only get for winning first prize in one of the ten script groups at the GRANSHAN Type Design Competition.

Golnar Katrahmani came from Berlin for the keynote, where the Iranian-born designer has lived for many years and runs **her own design studio** (https://katrahmani.com/). Since 2018, she has also been on a mission to improve the often negative political and ideological connotations of Arabic script. »How can Arabic script be seen as something other than problematic?« asks Golnar Katrahmani programmatically. Her answer: for example, through workshops and lectures that promote cultural exchange and knowledge transfer, but also through great graphic design and fashion with Arabic typography.

This was followed by presentations by Krista Radoeva (https://www.kristaradoeva.com) from Sofia, Bulgaria, who gave a brief historical outline and made it clear that Cyrillic is by no means synonymous with Russian, and by Dr. Huda Smitshuijzen AbiFarès (https://www.khtt.net/en/page/351/huda-smitshuijzen-abifarès). Due to technical problems, her presentation could not be shown – the video will be available shortly on the GRANSHAN YouTube Channel and here on the website. Her exhibition (https://www.mkg-hamburg.de/en/exhibitions/inner-structures-outer-rhythms) »The inner structures and outer rhythms of contemporary Arab and Persian graphic design« is on view at the Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe Hamburg (MK&G Hamburg) until 31 May 2025.

Also connected via video conference were designers Aaron Amar and Lloyd Zapanta from the Philippines, who spoke about the

revived Philippine script Baybayin. Between the presentations, the two GRANSHAN Chairpersons Veronika Burian and Toshi Omagari announced the winners in the various Script Groups.

One of the highlights was the awarding of the Grand Prize to Ana Sanikidze (https://www.instagram.com/wickedletters/). The type designer had traveled all the way from Tbilisi, Georgia, to receive her prize. When she received the megaphone (and 3,000 euros in prize money), she was beaming all over her face and then gave a convincing presentation on Georgian type in general and her fonts »Nocturno Georgian« and »Adapter Georgian« in particular.

Finally, GRANSHAN President Boris Kochan announced the presentation of the *Lifetime Honor Medal* to Edik Ghabuzyan, which will take place live and on site at the Mesrop-Mashtoz Institute for Ancient Manuscripts, or Matenadaran for short, in Armenia on September 7.

For all those who want to be there in person, meet Edik Ghabuzyan, and experience the fascinating country of Armenia live and in color: From 5 to 13 September, the *GRANSHAN Foundation e.V.* is organizing a study trip to the country between Orient and Occident in cooperation with other organizations such as the *Typographische Gesellschaft München (tgm)*. **Find out more on the website of another co-organizer, the newsletter magazine *8daw*.** (https://eightdaw.com/zeitlaeufte/8daw-study-trip-to-armenia)

The informative exchange on this well-filled day did not end with the last lecture – the friendly atmosphere and discussions continued for a long time in the campus' own beer garden.

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