

Dear artists, students, teachers, school directors, researchers, curators, actors for an open visual culture, friends of graphic forms and citizens!

I invite you to share in this text I am addressing to the Ministry of culture and communication to demand the means necessary to develop graphic design and design in general.

Le Signe, centre national du graphisme à Chaumont has just opened to the public but the operation budgets are not ensured. This gap cannot be a money matter when you take into account the modest amount claimed in comparison with the annual budget of the Ministry.

(...)

Many of us have fought over the past thirty years for a place in public space for design to enable all citizens to reflect upon the signs and objects surrounding them. It appears that only the demonstration of an open letter signed by thousands can make the supervisory bodies that seem to ignore us change their direction.

Struggles bring people together when it is a matter of questioning and improving things!

Fraternal, professional and artistic regards,

Vincent Perrottet
Graphic designer

A Great Sign for a Civic Insight

France lacks a real design policy and the relays needed for its implementation, even if architecture and object design have recently been granted with their respective estates in Paris and Saint Etienne, meeting places for the creative actors in order to to develop an awareness among the general public.

It is of utmost importance to know and make known the best of graphic design production and to analyse the entire production - through its presence in public and private spaces. This is necessary for the recognition of the creativity in this field and to improve certain productions and usages.

(...)

The inhabitants of Chaumont and its area have welcomed graphic designers, teachers, students and researchers for years and years now. The elected representatives –throughout the political spectrum have given the means needed for the existence and development of the Chaumont festival and its poster collections. The growth and recognition of the International Poster and Graphic Design Festival, one of the most renowned and attended ones in the world has given rise to meetings of all the actors in the graphic design field and federated the needs in this demand for estates making the conception of a real graphic design culture possible.

Le Signe, centre national du graphisme à Chaumont, was devised with the idea of sharing a vision and excellence. The State and the Region, as well as other contributors have accompanied the Town of Chaumont in the financing of a remarkable building, designed by the agency Moatti-Rivière, that can fulfil all the cultural, educational and scientific missions it is called to accomplish.

As a unique venue, in terms of its size and ambition, le Signe must be able to be the homestead of graphic culture in France and shine forth by accompanying all the graphic design events and cultural institutions involved in graphic design.

The preservation, restoration, and digitalization of the collections of vintage and contemporary posters, in view of an upcoming on-line publication require a considerable amount of work and means.

Exhibitions in the 1000 m² of space and their interpretation, the creation of a resource centre, the organisation of vocational training, workshops, conferences and symposiums, public showcasing of works created during workshops and print shops, hosting researchers, designers and also audiences, publishing, audio-visual production, maintaining a worthwhile website, are all missions designated for and by le Signe represent a cost that is not enough in comparison with the sums invested in other fields of culture.

This exhibition, preservation, educational, and prospective research tool requires the annual sum of three million Euros for its operation.

The Centre national du graphisme will live up to its **ambitions under the condition that the State, the Region Grand Est and the Town of Chaumont, the latter having already heavily invested, each put 850 000 Euros, the rest coming from other financial partners.**

The 2016 budget of the Ministry of Culture and Communication amounted to 7.3 billion Euros (representing an increase of 300 million Euros) . It will be increasing in 2017.

Let's calculate: 850 000 Euros represent 0.01% (one ten thousandth) of this budget.

Compared to the budget of the Region Grand Est with expenses of 2.5 billion Euros, this amounts to 3 ten thousandths. In its budget forecast, the Region allots 98 million Euros for land and town planning, 52 million Euros for culture and 79 million for international relations, three fields in which le Signe is entirely involved.

(...)

Both the Ministry of Culture and Communication and the Region Grand Est - for whom this cultural project with a national and international dimension on their territory is a genuine asset, must now release the necessary funds for its operation.

(...)

These must not be inferior to what is required for smooth operation. It is economically possible. The demand is in no way exceptional. It is politically, economically, and artistically defensible. It would in fact be incomprehensible if it were not to be heard.

(...)

« Ever since Toulouse Lautrec, we have been aware that graphic design is one of the places for art. It is actually the access of the greatest number to the beauty of forms. Its history, masterpieces prove that functional objectives present in the world of signs do not contradict with the artistic concerns. The use of pictures by the public sector, in a context dominated by advertising images, demands the familiarization of the professional know-how and graphic arts.»(1993, Jack Lang, Minister of Culture and communication at the time)

The continuing cultural void is detrimental in a world where images without ethical and intellectual value can become if they are not yet, a tool for controlling and conditioning rather than a tool for establishing relations and pleasing the eye.

The signatories of this text call upon the public authorities to grant the necessary means as of now for a centre that is meant to that of graphic creation, equal access to culture, and of an artistic and cultural education for visual practices.