Jost Hochuli

Awarded an Honorary Fellowship

Typographic 70

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Jost Hochuli was born on 8 June 1933 in the city of St Gallen. Jost is a Swiss graphic designer primarily known for his exceptional book designs. Between 1952 and 1954 he attended the Kunstgewerbeschule in St Gallen where he studied under Willi Baus. Jost subsequently joined the Zollikofer printing company where he worked first as a part-time assistant under Rudolf Hostettler (editor of the Typografische Monatsblätter, TM) and thereafter from 1955 until 1958 as an apprentice compositor. During this time he undertook a course with Walter Käch (who also had taught Emil Ruder and Adrian Frutiger) at the Setzerfachklasse of the Kunstgewerbeschule in Zurich.

Between 1958 and 1959 he enrolled at the École Estienne in Paris where he took courses under Adrian Frutiger. In 1959 Jost returned to St Gallen and set up his own studio. He co-founded VGS Verlagsgemeinschaft (now Verlagsgenossenschaft) St Gallen in 1979 where he was President of the publishing company until 2004; and operated as editor and designer until 2011. Jost produced themed publications for Typotron from 1983 to 1998 and for Edition Ostschweiz from 2000 onwards.

Jost has become a widely published author with many books translated into numerous languages. His books include: In Memory of Rudolf Hostettler (1983); Book Design as a School of Thought (1991); Book Design in Switzerland (1993); Designing Books (1996); Printed Matter, Mainly Books (2001); The Detail in Typography (2005); Das ABC eines Typografen (2011); Metamorphose (2014); and Tschichold’s Fascicles (2015). For a period Book Design of Switzerland was supplied by the Swiss Embassy in London as a representation of Swiss culture. He was editor of the exhibition catalogue Jan Tschichold: Typograph und Schriftentwerfer (1976). His work has been widely exhibited around the world at places such as: Stadtmuseum Munich (1983); Warsaw, Krakau, Thorn and Posen (between 1989 and 1990); Stuttgart (1991); London (1996); St Gallen (1997); Gutenberg Museum in Mainz (1998); and Leipzig (1999).

Jost taught writing and basic design, in a part-time capacity, at Kunstgewerbeschule in Zurich from 1967 to 1980 and between 1980 to 1996 also at the Schule für Gestaltung in St Gallen. In terms of his own reading he references Norman Potter’s book What is a Designer as a serious text worthy of consultation.

As well as being awarded an Honorary Fellow International Society of Typographic Designers (HonFISTD) in 2017, Jost has received the following accolades: Icograda Honorary Award at the International Book Art Exhibition in Leipzig (1989); Gutenberg Prize of the City of Leipzig (1999); Jan Tschichold Prize (2004); Honorary Member of the Double Crown Club in London and Senator of the International Gutenberg Society in Mainz.

Jost established the type foundry ABC Litera in 2014 with Roland Stieger and Jonas Niedermann. The company distributes the font Allegra (2015), which was the first typeface Jost designed and published. Jost continues as a designer; exhibition curator; and lecturer on the theme of books. His work has an enviable lightness of touch and he has commented that ‘simplicity not only has to be timeless but special’. In designing his books he has stated that he aims for permanence but acknowledges that this is rarely eternal. He admires Dutch book designer Piet Gerards and favours the typefaces Trinité and Lexicon by Bram de Does and Collis by Christoph Noordzij. His recommendation to young designers is to read ‘not only the technical books of our field, but also ambitious literary works’. He suggests those starting out should be ‘critical of modish trends…’ and promotes ‘being curious [and] socially minded’. And what was Jost’s ambition as a child? To be a forester!