



Image courtesy: Siri Bachmann

Activating the Archive through Generative Systems

Materials from Aalto University's Learning Centre Rare Books Collection become activated in a graphic design project by Siri Bachmann.

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The Learning Centre's Rare Books Collection consists of about 300 books from the 1880's–1930's, that were used as teaching material to show examples and inspire the students for their own work. The designer student came in contact with the Visual Resources Centre (VRC) of the Learning Centre last autumn, learned about the visual collections and the Rare Books Collection, and got excited. "My main motivation to use the collection in the project was the beauty of the material. I felt this fine old collection could still be valuable. These books are not yet digitised nor directly accessible to the public, so I wanted to showcase them and reactivate their original purpose of being the source for inspiration to other students", Bachmann explains.

Exhibition prints are an outcome of her project for the Designer-in-Residence program at the VRC and can now be seen in the Learning Centre spaces—which is the ideal place to exhibit, because the Rare Books Collection is literally stored two floors below. "I wanted to

showcase these wonderful resources and inspire other students to take a look at the archive and find something useful for their own work”, says Bachmann.

Generative art and design systems

The focus of Bachmann’s Master's thesis is on analog generative art and design systems. Last spring semester Bachmann took a course called Generative and Interactive Narratives, where she got acquainted with and excited about generative systems. For her thesis project, she developed a generative system to use for working with the materials from the VRC. “The generative approach is an effective tool for working with a large quantity of images. The system may also produce unexpected results, since it forces you to work with material and combinations that you may not have chosen otherwise”, Bachmann says.

Bachmann wanted to have a hands-on, human-scale approach to the material, so she decided the final result of her project should be produced with a high-quality analog printing technique. Her prints are a combination of inkjet and silkscreen printing. “On top of the beauty of images themselves, the original books’ strong materiality inspires me: it is the craftsmanship, the colors, the papers and the large sizes”, Bachmann says.

The VRC residency program is open for Aalto University students, researchers, artists or designers, to work for a period of time with the Aalto visual collections to produce a project or exhibition.

Date: Oct 23rd–Nov 15th

Venue: Harald Herlin Learning Centre, foyer, 2nd floor and the VRC, 1st floor