

world seems to be moving east, or working remotely to mentioned unmatched flight connections. When the of the critical cultural poles of the western world—not What interests me about London is its position as one

Why do you live in London?

Dude.

What's your favorite word?

Switzerland and I feel Californian. an abstract concept, in California I feel Swiss and in European than Europe. Nationality has always been and very often Switzerland—which stills feel more central and South America, Europe and Eastern Europe early age I made my first trips to the Far East, Cen- and seeing the world lead to many discoveries. At an travelling became an important aspect of family life I have always been between places. At a young age The rumours are true. Though I grew up in California mean to you?

Rumors say you are Swiss. What does Switzerland

design, like curating exists in relation to other disciplines and to so it must be at once specialised and generalist. There are risks of concentrating energies exclusively at either end of the spectrum.

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A designer is an emerging synthesis of artist, inventor, mechanic, objective economist and evolutionary strategist. —Buckminster Fuller

This interview is part of an ongoing conversation between Zak Kyes and Hans Ulrich Obrist. It took place by email and SMS on April 9, 2009.

Buckminster Fuller said "I seem to be a verb." Graphic and is less of a finite discipline than it is a verb. As Graphic design is characterized by multiple identities

a new concentration?

you think that expansion will continue or do you see boundaries. Bruce Mau now designs countries. Do Graphic design over last twenty years has expanded

galleries.

in publicly available spaces such as exhibitions and distributed through the cultural economy, available conceived with an architect, and the rest would be physical structure of a private library/collection co-ications. Part of the edition would be housed in the with a patron, a platform for the production of pub-rary art practices. The idea here would be to establish, their increasingly fertile relationship with contempo-reluctant to support design processes, even given of supporting the production of art objects they are collectors and patrons are comfortable with the idea within the context of the cultural field. While many which is a proposal for a new model of publishing My big unrealised project is a new book economy, *What are your unrealised projects?*

Press, established at the Architectural Association.

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ZAK KYES & HANS ULRICH OBRIST

INTERVIEW II: SMS/EMAIL

HANS ULRICH OBRIST: *What's your political project?*

ZAK KYES: In the strict sense of the political as strategies for governing I don't conceive of my practice as an overtly political one. At the same time ideologies are always present—even in the most functional Modernist projects agendas are concealed behind a guise of pragmatism. I would not deny that there are political implications in a practice that engages alternatives modes of operating, but this is only a means to an end.

Are you linked to Russian constructivism?

Only in that one of the first pieces of graphic design that I was shown while in elementary school was a geometric constructivist poster by the Stenberg brothers. An even more oblique connection would be that the Constructivists, in their synthesis of art, architecture and "commercial art", used design as a critical tool and as a tool for social change.

Who are your heroes in graphic design?

Quentin Fiore and his collaboration with Buckminster Fuller on *I Seem to be a Verb*, Alvin Lustig for

Do you have pets?
I have a Jack Russel Terrier named James.

Do you have a car?
No, I have a second-hand bicycle.

Buckminster Fuller said that real estate is a service, not something to own. Why did you buy a flat?
Since 2008 I live in Golden Lane Estate designed by the architects Chamberlin, Powell and Bon, admirers of Corbusier and rumour has it even the Situationists. They later went on to design the adjacent Barbican complex. This utopian project, now a slightly shabby modernist urban village, is also the current home to many artists, designers, architects, and writers. Ian Sinclair even devotes a chapter to it in his book *Hackney, That Rose-red Empire* mentioning some of its residents including Stewart Home and Tom McCarthy. At the estate the utopian project is still in the air.

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from economically more hospitable locales, my optimism of living in a metropolis like London is only renewed. I ended up in London almost by chance after dropping out of a double major in art-history and business at a small liberal arts school in New York and then attending CalArts just outside LA.

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What are you working on today, April 9, 2009? What is your list of all projects urgent?

Solution 11-167: The Book of Scotlands, the *Serpentine Gallery Manifesto Marathon* publication, Dubai Düsseldorf exhibition, *Exhibition Prosthetics* by Joseph Grigely, Bedford Press, a wedding invitation and preparing various talks.

Annex question: do you have non western influences in your work?

It's perhaps not a direct influence, but I recently made several journeys to the Middle East for research in preparation for the group exhibition Dubai Düsseldorf opening this August at Kunstverein Düsseldorf.

What's the Zak way?

The Zak way is Economic Design.

Do you invent a new economy?
Yes, this is one of the aims of our private press, Bedford

How do you chose your clients?
Many of my clients are the product of long-term collaborations with fellow graphic designers, architects, writers, editors, curators, and artists. This practice more closely resembles an on going collaboration between a network of practitioners as opposed to a typical designer-client relationship. In my role at the Architectural Association two distinct aspects of my work are connected, design and everything else: teaching, planning and editorial work. The result is a practise which is in constant negotiation with the highly specialised role of a graphic designer. These negotiations question the model of a graphic designer in ways that amounts to a practice which entails more than just design.

What's your epiphany?
That reality is the result of an active imagination.

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the temptation is irresistible. Graphic design became a way to tie together interests in many disciplines. This requires one to be involved in many fields and agile enough to negotiate between them.

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the cover to Lorca's *3 Tragedies* and *Blueprint for Counter Education* to name a few...

Are you a political activist?

No.

What's your collaboration with architects?

I joined the Architectural Association as Art Director of the AA Print Studio in September 2006 and have since come into contact with many architects from different generations. The conversations at the school's bar revealed the potential for a parallel—rather than cross—disciplinary approach. The Print Studio was originally established in 1971/72 by Denis Crompton of Archigram to shape the school's architectural discourse through the production and distribution of publications. Books have been a key reason for the school's success during times when many projects were never intended to be realized. Consequently, the book became an ideal architectural site.

And artists?

Even when I was in school I found my interests closer to what the artists and writers were doing but somehow I decided not to go in that direction. It was very tempting and it still is. Collaborations happen when