Perfection is unlimited in the age of digital image enhancement. We are already used to the smooth and unblemished aesthetics, i.e. in ever more spectacular animated movies or glossy magazines. And now this: photographs of handmade alphabetic characters in the midst of a wide-open landscape, a wild mix of loosely lying about materials. Silhouettes from carton leftovers. This is exactly what the book Three D – Graphic Spaces is all about: the transformation of messages into three-dimensional scenarios. The collected examples by an international group of mostly younger graphic designers range from tabloid still lifes to installations. Some of them leave the safe confinements of the studios and present numbers, characters and symbols made from all sorts of materials and so breathe life into the inanimate world of objects – and after all, nothing else is implied by the term animation.

The principle: organise figures, objects, three-dimensional letters in a room, on the floor or in the outdoors and turn the resulting images into posters, flyers, covers for magazines and CDs, websites or animated movies. Consciously say good-bye to the possibilities of visual manipulation and return to the analogue world to achieve the desired effects. The result is astonishing: one is forced to look more closely. The interplay between illusion and reality, the deliberate imperfections are the cause of irritation for the observer.

The multi-award-winning Frankfurt-based design studio Pixelgarten and Gerrit Terstiege, editor in chief of the design journal “form”, present the players involved in this movement. The journalist Sophia Muckle introduces the four chapters (Still Life comes alive, Intricate installations, Touching Type, Thrilling Animations) with in-depth knowledge of the matter. Steven Heller, on the other hand, reflects on the historical dimensions of the topic. The author and editor of more than one hundred publications on the history and current state of graphic design is recognised as an international authority and well known to visual designers on both sides of the Atlantic for his work at the New York School of Visual Arts as well as his countless articles and lectures. An interview with the star designer Stefan Sagmeister – who already worked for Lou Reed, the Talking Heads and the Rolling Stones – and who can be counted among the leading exponents of this trend, gives interesting insight into his method of working.

Gerrit Terstiege is editor in chief of the design journal form since 2006. He is also involved in teaching since 1998: he was lecturer at the design colleges in Karlsruhe, Basel and Zurich as well as visiting professor for design history in Mainz. Adrian Niessler and Catrin Altenbrandt founded the Frankfurt-based design studio Pixelgarten in 2004. Since then the graduates of the Hochschule für Gestaltung Offenbach have worked for a selection of renowned national and international clients.

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