

Experimental Ex-libris and New Approaches

Lecturer **Esma Ünsal Laratte**
Samsun Ondokuz Mayıs University,
Samsun Vocational School
Department of Visual Auditory Techniques
and Media Productions
esunsal@gmail.com

Asst. Prof. **Armağan Gökçe Arslan**
Hacı Bayram Veli University
Faculty of Art and Design
Department of Graphic Design
armagangokce778@gmail.com

Full Length Paper
Accepted 10 June 2019

“God is really only another artist. He invented the giraffe, the elephant and the ant. He has no real style, He just goes on trying other things.” P. Picasso

Abstract

The notion of experimentality can be found in multiple fields including plastic and performing arts as well as in scientific and technological progress. An experiment; can be defined as a new, untraditional, unclassifiable and surprising notion. From this definition we can presume that all steps taken by mankind in order to achieve what is new, can be considered as experimentality. Experimental ex-libris, besides from being a relatively new notion, with the impact of technological progress, especially due the different approaches of young designers, has added new methods to the traditional design of ex-libris.

In this study titled “Experimental Ex-libris and New Approaches” the notion of experimentality has been studied in the ex-libris and new ways of expression, through the usage of different materials and trial of new techniques, have been researched. This study is considered to enable the testing of new methods and approaches in the ex-libris design, and can become a source used by ex-libris designers and beginners.

Key words: Ex-Libris, Experimental, Graphic Design, Communication, Typography, Art

Introduction

Since the beginning of book production, people who have connected to their volumes with eternal love and respect have included the ex-libris in their lives. A very old art element, ex libris has been put in the center of attention by thousands of artists and millions of ex-libris have been produced. Associations have been established in almost every country in the world and competitions, exhibitions have been and are still being organized on its behalf. Various rules and definitions of ex-libris designs have been determined by FISAE (International Federation of Ex-libris Societies). These rules will be discussed in the definition part. Many different techniques have been used in ex-libris design from past to present. Today, in addition to traditional printing techniques, techniques and experimental approaches produced in digital media can be found.

“In every field, there are attempts to develop new ways of thinking, to redefine known rules, to create new technologies, or to use the old in new ways so as to set out new lanes. It is possible to experiment with contents and forms, the medias (techniques) can also be combined or techniques and technologies applied. Everything changes over time: each and every classically accepted technique is experimental when first used”
(Ciric, 2014: 1).

“From a scientific standpoint, an experiment is the testing of an idea and a series of actions to prove the accuracy or falsity of the hypothesis that is being tested” (Bil’ak, 2007: 1). Ex-libris, although designed with traditional methods, has entered a process of renewal in direct proportion to technological developments. Sayın (2017: 2) associates the new developments in ex-libris with the rapid developments in technology and even predicts that traditional ex-libris applications affixed to the inner cover of the book will be replaced by animation / animated examples attached to electronic books in virtual environments

Pektaş (2014) stated that for experimental ex-libris, it is necessary to choose eccentric ideas and to use all the available materials and techniques, and to relentlessly try out every idea possible.

In a library, there are hundreds of books on different topics, from poetry to history, from astronomy to world literature, and the ex-libris also vary depending on the owner’s interests or the artist’s inspiration, just like the diversity of the book’s subjects (Van Den Briele, 1995: 15). With his words, the Belgian artist Luc Van Den Briele emphasized the diversity of ex-libris art and explained the visual richness of the ex libris designs by linking the

features of the book owner and artist to the designs.

Many academics who work in the field of visual design indicate in their publications and courses that designs such as packagings, labels, banners, logos etc. should be approached from a different perspective.

This idea and approach is also valid for ex-libris design, as the ex-libris designed with this understanding will allow the experimental ex-libris to spread rapidly and gain a universal dimension

Definition and Techniques of Ex-libris

Ex-libris always reflect the name and character of the owner. Ex-libris is defined in literature as follows:

“Ex-libris are small original works of art that have been affixed to the inner cover of books by the book lovers featuring their names and pictures on different subjects. They introduce the owner of the book, glorify them, and warn the borrower to bring back the book. Ex-libris isn’t an indicator of the book but rather of the owner of the book, a bond between the volume and it’s owner. It means that it belongs to “...” or to “...”’s library. (Pektaş, 2014: 11).”

Ex-libris, which is also considered within the communication phenomenon, is a kind of message that book lovers send to other people. It is possible to encounter these types of messages within the monastery books in the Middle Ages. In these books, “requests were made to pay attention to the borrowed books, as well as threats and lists of punishments if these volumes were to be lost.” (Pektaş, 2014: 12). Benoit Junod, one of the most important ex-libris artists and collectors of our day, defines the ex libris as follows; “Since the earliest of times, the books have been protected with passion and love by their owners. Therefore, the book owners have chosen to mark them with the need for protection and ownership. These signs “...” are called ex-libris ”(Junod, 1995: 10).

In traditional ex-libris prints, intaglio printing, relief printing, flatbad- stencil and electronic prints are used. Within these printing groups, a large variety of printing techniques can be found. These techniques also have their own printing symbols. These symbols were recently revised at the FISEA congress in Denmark in 2002 (Pektaş, 2014: 8). Detailed ex- libris printing techniques and symbols are available on the FISEA website.

<http://www.fisae.org/techsymbols.html>



Image 1: Experimental ex-libris work by Felix Auer, 150x35 mm, 2008

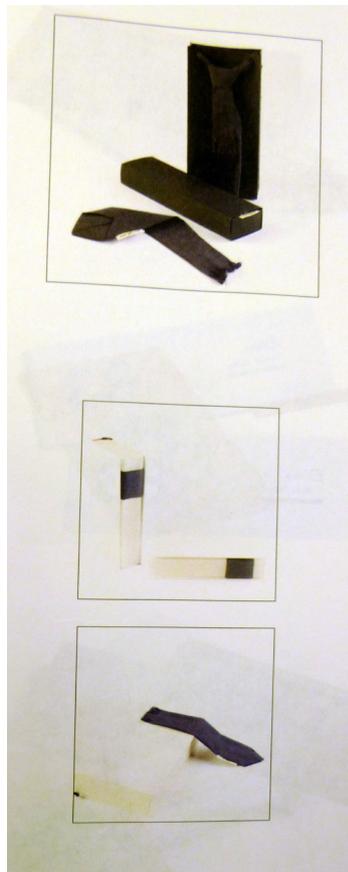


Image 2: Experimental ex-libris work designed by Stefan Bauenberger, 160x50 mm, 2008

Experimental Ex-libris

Even though some artists remain attached to traditional ex-libris design methods and are reluctant to modern ex-libris made with new techniques, young designers recent interest to modern techniques will make this reluctancy gradually disappear. One of the first artists to work on experimental ex-libris was Prof. Rastco Ciric, who published the very first article on the subject. There are several experimental ex-libris design artists in Turkey as well. Experimental ex-libris designs have been frequently encountered in the last decade. One of the best examples to illustrate this popularity is the graduation thesis subject of the Master of Graphic Arts students in Vienna in 2008. The students exhibited their ex-libris designs at the “Wien Bibliothek” library and cataloged these designs. The original catalog can be found in the library of the Istanbul Ex-libris Association. Some examples of experimental ex-libris published in the catalog are as follows.

In the experimental ex-libris example designed by Felix Auer (Image 1), an unusual design is adopted that breaks the rules of ex-libris. For example, it is unclear whom the ex-libris has been made for and the design is not located on the inner surface of the book cover. The design uses five cardboard pieces, each folded in the form of an accordion. When these folded cardboard pieces are unfolded, the word ‘ex-libris’ appears. In addition, these pieces are embedded in the book since the pages inside have been carved. This creation is far from being functional but has an experimental design trait.

Another example belongs to Stefan Bauenberger. The designer created the ex-libris in a tie format. (Image 2) At the end of the tie affixed to the inner cover of the book is a piece of printed paper with the word “Ex-libris” written on it. This ex-libris can also serve as a bookmark in this case. It is an unusual and different approach, contrary to the traditional ex-libris rules.

Stefan Silberfeld’s design combines packaging and ex-libris (Image 3). The package has been made by using a black cardboard box with ‘20 Ex-libris, 80x13 mm, Tom Berenger’ written on it. The ex-libris are featured as bullets. ‘Ex-libris Tom Berenger’ is written on each of them. Through the combination of packaging and ex-libris, this design is quite interesting and aesthetic, but the lack of information on the artist and the lack of technical information on the design can be negatively evaluated in this case.

Up until now, collages, pop-ups, puzzles, virtual and motion graphics, holograms, lenticulars, miscellaneous (imagery play), barcodes and 3D techniques have been used in experimental ex-libris.



Image 3: Experimental ex-libris study designed by Stefan Silberfeld, 80x13 mm, 2008

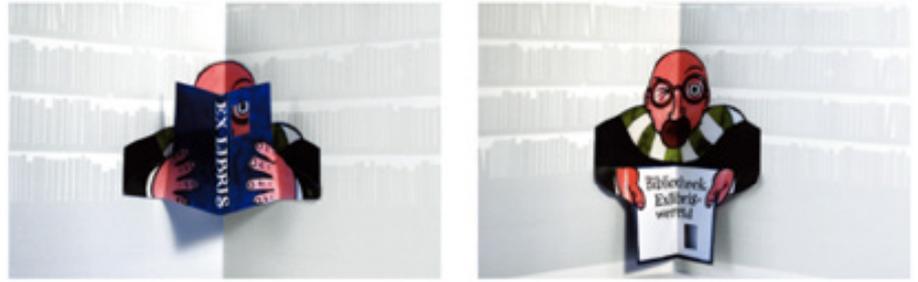


Image 4: RExperimental ex-libris work designed by Rastco Ciric, 2014

The pop-up ex-libris is a good example of the ex-libris designed by Rastco Ciric for the german 'Exlibriswereld' magazine. (Image 4). When the book is opened, the illustration of the man in the ex-libris design gives the impression that he is reading his blue book and is looking at us through a small hole on the cover of his book. When this blue book is bent down, the text 'Bibliothek Exlibriswereld' appears. He also states in his article that the first pop-up ex-libris design was made in 1988 by Juan Carlo Franco on behalf of Benoit Junod. (Ciric, 2014: 2)

In recent years, ex-libris designs have been made for electronic books as well. One of the best examples of these designs, called virtual ex-libris, is the ex-libris displayed on "Image 5" by Rastco Ciric for Benoit Junod. It is a non-printed format and is designed as an exclusively digital creation. When the computer is turned on, it appears as a boot object and provides information about the owner. (Ciric, 2014: 4)

A well-known animated ex-libris design was made by artist Rastco Ciric. As seen on "Image 6" in Rastco Ciric's ex-libris, when the two pieces of paper stacked on top of each other are flipped quickly, the menacing teeth of the second image appear. It is clear that the artist designed this threatening image as a precaution against book thieves.



Image 5: Rastco Ciric tarafından tasarlanmış deneysel ekslibris çalışması, 2014



Image 6: Experimental ex-libris work designed by Rastco Ciric 2014



Image 7: AR Ex-libris work designed by Esma Laratte, 2017

AR (Augmented Reality) ex-libris is an experimental ex-libris example designed by the researcher for her proficiency in art thesis.

Bilinen hareketli (animasyon) ekslibris tasarımı ise sanatçı Ranko Munitic tarafından yapılmıştır. Görsel 6'da Rastko Ciric'e ait ekslibriste, üstüste konulan iki kağıt parçası hızlı bir şekilde oynatıldığında, ikinci imgenin tehditkar dişleri görülmektedir. Sanatçının bu tehditkar imgeyi, kitap hırsızlarına karşı bir önlem olarak tasarladığı açıkça görülmektedir.

“Augmented reality can be expressed as real-time, direct or indirect transmission of computer-generated audio, video, graphics or GPS information to the physical world” (Gökçearslan, 2016: Azuma, Zhou, Duh & Billinghamurst). It is possible to make ex-libris designs with AR technology, which has been used in almost every field in recent years. In the AR ex-libris example in “Image 7”, 3D objects consisting of marbles and white cats were designed using “Cinema 4D” and “After Effects” programs. First, when the book cover is opened, the inner page shows an ex-libris design with a QR code, black cat, an opened book image and “Ex-libris” inscription. This ex-libris design was created using “Adobe Illustrator” and then replicated with digital printing. The code on the ex-libris is deciphered through the ‘QR Code Reader’ application installed on a smartphone. A white cat appears with a meowing sound effect and then the gray balls are scattered around on the screen.

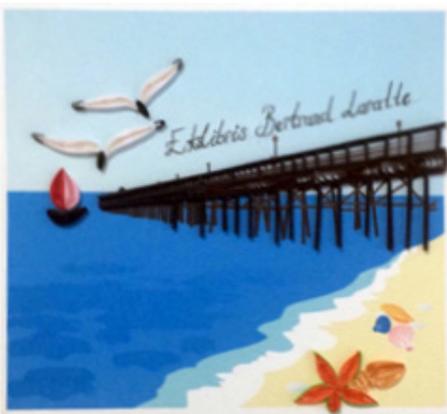


Image 8: Quilling Ex-libris work designed by Esma Laratte, 2017

Finally, the Quilling ex-libris sample designed by the researcher for her proficiency in art thesis can be seen in “Image 8”. “Quilling is a form of art that combines shapes made of thin pieces of paper wrapped around a needle” (Sun- ok Choi, 2007: 10). It is known that the art of quilling emerged with the discovery of paper in China in 105 A.C., in parallel with the

development of art in the Renaissance, and became widespread in Europe (Blake, 1976: 8). It was used in those years to decorate the covers of holy books, and today it is most commonly used in decorative arts.

In the quilling ex-libris design displayed beneath, sea and beach visuals were designed using “Adobe Illustrator” and multiplied through digital printing. Then images of seagull, ship, bridge and starfish have been created using the quilling technique and added to the final work.

Conclusion

Different methods and multi-disciplinary approaches in ex-libris designs are discussed with the experimental ex-libris examples included in this study. In addition, in the researcher’s ‘Experimental Ex-libris’ study, experimental ex-libris was performed through the use of video, audio, music, light, quilling and AR (Augmented Reality) techniques. Only quilling and AR ex-libris are included in this article, as the other experimental ex-libris designs will be presented during the thesis defense exhibition.

In ex-libris designs, original creations can be made without breaking the basic rules of ex-libris design, making fun and unusual experimental ex-libris and trying different expression styles. Thus, with these new approaches, this art object that goes back to ancient times can be updated to keep up with the age. In addition, at the end of the thesis work, FISEA will be proposed to give a separate code for experimental ex-libris.

194 □

Bibliography

Bil’ak, Peter, (2007). Experimental Typography. Whatever That Means: Grafik Tasarım Dergisi/ Sayı 11

Blake, Joyce. “The Delicate Art of Quilling.” Design 77.3 (1976): 8-10.

Ciric, Rastco, (2014). Deneysel Eksilibris: Ex-Libris, International Journal of Ex-Libris / Vol.1/ Part 1 (Ex-Libris, Uluslararası Ekslibris Dergisi / Cilt 1/ Bölüm 1)

Exlbris, Ausstellung ’08 (2008), (Sergi Kataloğu), Wien

Gökçearslan, A.(2016). “Artırılmış Gerçeklik Uygulamaları ve Grafik Tasarım Alanına Yansımaları / Augmented Reality Applications and Its Reflections

on Graphic Design”, TURKISH STUDIES- International Periodical for the Languages, Literature and History of Turkish or Turkic-, ISSN: 1308-2140, Volume 11/21 Fall 2016, ANKARA/TURKEY

Junod, Benoit (1995), The World of Ex-libris, A Historical Retrospective (Sergi Kataloğu), Belgrade Ex-libris Circle, Belgrade.

Kenan, James P. (2003), The Art of The Bookplate, Barnes & Noble Books, New York

Pektaş, Hasip. (2014), Ekslibris. İstanbul: İstanbul Ekslibris Derneği Yayınları, 3.Baskı

Sayın, Zülfikar, (2017) Sanatçı Göstergesi Olarak Ekslibris: Ex-Libris, International Journal of Ex-Libris / Vol.4/ Part 7 (Ex-Libris, Uluslararası Ekslibris Dergisi / Cilt 4/ Bölüm 7)

Sun- ok Choi, Claire. (2007), The Art of Quilling: Designing Handcrafted Gifts and Cards. Gloucester: Quarry Books, 1th Edition

Van Den Briele, Luc (1995), The Wold of Ex-libris, Ekslibris & Their Owners (Sergi Kataloğu), Belgrade.

<http://www.fisae.org/techsymbols.html> Last Access: 10.05.2019)