

## Description of the importance of Typojanchi in Seoul

Typojanchi is an international typographic biennial organized by the Korean Ministry of Culture, in collaboration with the Korean Craft & Design Foundation [KCDF] <http://www.kcdf.kr/eng/> and the Korean Society of Typography <http://koreantypography.org/en/>

As the only biennial specifically dedicated to typography, Typojanchi explores the intersections in the art of visual language with other cultural domains – literature, urbanism, cinema, politics and economics.

The First edition of Typojanchi was in 2001 but regardless of how well it went, the event was unable to go further in the next years. Later, in 2011, the overall motivation of the initiators and organizers made the next editions possible again, then officially recognized by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism. Today, Typojanchi looks forward to its third edition.

This year's team have chosen the theme: “ **Typography As Literature** ”. We see so many ways of demonstrating this once again in a new way with the ideas described in the document explaining our intentions for the actual workshop.

Typography has a dual identity: it is as much an art of language as a visual art. Typojanchi 2013 is devoted to the literary potentials of typography in the overlap of the two realms.

It would not be an exaggeration that human history was created with writing: it enabled knowledge to be shared and transferred, and transformed the very sense of time by dramatically extending human memory. Printing, by allowing the mass reproduction and dissemination of text, served as a foundation for modernity. It also created typography as we know it: an activity to create types and organize the characters into texts. Throughout modernity, typography performed a vital yet not-so-visible agent.

Centuries have past since the “printing revolution,” and now the “digital revolution,” often claimed to have fundamentally transformed the nature of modernity, is already an old news. And the typography today is not such a silent force anymore: instead, we are witnessing a kind of typography that not only shapes given texts, but actively and critically participates in the generation, interpretation and dissemination of text.

Since the last decades of the twentieth century, many typographic designers have claimed the role of researcher, writer, editor or publisher, rather than being content with the status as a service provider. Some of them would refuse fixed meanings and chose to create new ones. Some others would propose new ways of writing, reading and sharing the text. Some designers even initiated an investigation in the materiality of language itself. Their typography would constantly intervene in the once sacred text, exploring the themes that had traditionally been reserved for literary studies: conditions, conventions and nature of writing. Thus, typography itself became a form of literature.

There are both opportunities and dangers in these intensified textual activities by typographic designers. Certainly, it can provide new insights into how we communicate using words. It may, however, undermine the traditional depth and rigor of literary culture, in the process of questioning the

accepted norms of literature as an art of written work. Unsettling and destabilizing, it can easily become hyperactive—restlessly disruptive—chatters. As many critics noted, “designer as author” model has tended to foster self-centeredness and narcissism. Designers’ self-publishing activities, flourishing for the past few years, have produced as many vacant titles as meaningful contributions.

Below the bubbles, however, there has been growing awareness—by designers, of course, but also by writers—that literature is a formal construction to be probed into by non-verbal means; language is a material, tangible or otherwise; meaning is mediated by various forces including technology and techniques to represent words; and the fate of a text is often contingent on the infrastructure of production, post-production and distribution. In all of these, there are possibilities for typography to play a directly literary role. Typojanchi 2013 intends to find out how it has been played out in recent years, and how it can be now.