FOTOMUSEUM LAUNCHES NEW VISUAL IDENTITY, WEBSITE AND DIGITAL ASSET MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Today Fotomuseum Winterthur launches a new visual identity, including the redesign of its website and the building of an innovative digital asset management system. A year in the planning these infrastructure and design changes bring the museum's communications systems up to date, offering a new creative identity adequate to the very latest developments in photography. Fotomuseum is now better able to communicate its rich content to audiences in Switzerland and abroad, store and retrieve its substantial digital assets, and make efficiencies in its workflow.

Photography is changing rapidly, extending its capacities in relation to computational technologies, data processing and the power of the network. No longer defined by the relative singularity of the chemical image, digital photography increasingly mixes still and moving forms, is subject to instantaneous transformation and is augmented by vast and unpredictable replication. In the algorithmic age photographic imagery is extensively distributed and shaped by incessant change. Connections and interactions between different aspects of the system become more significant.

Fotomuseum has decided to respond decisively to these changes by creating a new visual identity adequate to an extended notion of the photographic. In late 2014 it began a process of renewal, changing its programme and work regimes in relation to the latest developments in creative practice, theory and institutional positioning. In early 2015 it appointed a Digital Curator who joined the museum from Hong Kong. Three months later, in April 2015, it launched SITUATIONS, a new programme format designed to explore the latest manifestations of the photographic. And from the middle of the year, with the support of the Zurich company, Laksila Associates, Fotomuseum began a bidding process to select a design team to take the renewal process forward.

Working with the Rotterdam designer, Simon Davies, Fotomuseum's curatorial team has formulated an identity that challenges the previously static conception of both photography and the institution, moving decisively beyond its well-established analogue associations. At the same time, the Directors wanted to respect the historical legacy of Fotomuseum and its situation in Winterthur, developing a relatively simple logotype that nonetheless expresses a semantic instability in relation to previously fixed institutional and medium identities. An idea was generated creating an interstice, or gap, between the words 'Foto' and 'Museum', expressing both the historical solidity of Fotomuseum as well as the challenge posed by a photographic aesthetic of derealisation and constant change. Enabling the insertion of a variety of conceptual elements, **Foto_museum** engages with the relational aspects of contemporary photographic identities. It can be at once monumental and dynamic, compact and extensive, serious and playful.

Museums now comprise vast digital infrastructures and central to the project has been the renovation of Fotomuseum's old website. Along with Simon Davies, the web engineering firm, Systemantics, was employed and Fotomuseum's website has been completely redesigned. It now presents the activities of Fotomuseum more clearly

Foto reformatting reality museum

with a strong emphasis on the visual content of the museum. Navigation has been simplified to improve user experience, including full mobile accessibility. A variety of social media has been embedded in the site and a video channel launched to archive interviews and presentations conducted at the museum. Fotomuseum has amassed significant content over the years and this can now be accessed through a search function that aggregates results across the whole website. More content from Fotomuseum's history as well as a tagging system will be added over the next six months or so. The final result is a website that is packed full of information, easier to use and more visually engaging for online visitors.

Fotomuseum's digital content has been managed up until now by multiple IT platforms. Like internet technologies, these platforms are constantly evolving, but they have also created isolated silos of information requiring complex integration if data is to be shared and sustained. Fotomuseum has taken the radical step of moving beyond specific IT products for functions such as the online collection, blogs and the publication archive, and has built a unified, fully-linked and sustainable digital asset management system (DAMS). Collaboration with a research consortium, Data Futures, based at the University of Westminster in London, enabled automated transformation of data from multiple existing IT systems into a single corpus which now provides access to Fotomuseum's many assets for the new website. Data Futures' open source *freizo* migration software ensures the sustainability of the Fotomuseum DAMS over many decades. It has built a future-proof foundation for new services such as metadata harvesting for other institutions or interfaces for scholarly research.

Finally, Fotomuseum has also renovated its analogue communications media, providing a new design for posters, invitation cards and other printed matter. These media have been rationalised and present the possibility of project-specific design that also enables the playful and challenging aspects of the **Foto_museum** logotype.

Duncan Forbes, Fotomuseum Director, said: *We are very proud of this transformation and believe we've designed an identity for Fotomuseum which enhances its reputation as a leading venue for photography, as well as being both playful and intellectually challenging. Furthermore, for a mid-sized museum our digital infrastructure is now one of the most advanced in Europe. This has been a huge amount of work for a small team with a busy programme and I am very grateful to Fotomuseum's staff as well as our many external collaborators for their hard work and commitment. Fotomuseum is fit for the future and can continue to engage creatively with the photographic image, one of the most dynamic arenas of contemporary culture.*

Simon Davies, designer, said: *Traditional visual identity design usually aims to create a reassuring illusion of simplicity and stability. However, this is often reductive, masking the more creative aspects of institutions, as well as their place within a complex and unpredictable world. The new Fotomuseum design brings out the dynamic aspects of the museum, offering a strong, conceptually-grounded identity. It capitalises on a visual and semantic cleft between 'Foto' and 'museum', creating an evolving space which challenges the visitor to think both about the changing nature of the photographic today as well as Fotomuseum's rich historical legacy.*

Peter Cornwell, Data Futures Director, said: *Fotomuseum's ground-breaking digital strategy addresses a critical challenge facing the whole museum sector. Sustainability of digital information represents a problem not only for the cultural sector, but for the whole research community. While corporations can fund serial re-implementation*

of IT platforms as technologies become obsolete, museums must find long-lasting solutions and protect investment in existing assets and exploding volumes of data. Fotomuseum's creation of a sustainable digital resource at the core of its new services sets a standard for museum regeneration.

Lutz Issler, Director of Systemantics, said: *Fotomuseum's new website is one of the key ways its rich collection of digital content can be accessed. The website is built on Systemantics' well-established and flexible platform and realised with open source components only. In this way not only the content and digital assets but also the website's architectural approach itself is sustainable by providing an excellent level of extendibility and upgradeability. Also, a template-driven approach has been chosen in order to prepare for the next level of devices people will use to access Fotomuseum's digital resources.*

For further information, interviews etc. about the project, please contact Fotomuseum at presse@fotomuseum.ch

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Foto expanded photography **museum**

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