

identita

příběh českého
grafického designu

PRESS RELEASE

Aleš Najbrt guides us through Czech graphic design in the TV series *Identita*

Identita – the story of Czech graphic design to be
broadcast starting 11 January 2024



The first-ever TV series on Czech graphic design is titled *Identita – the story of Czech graphic design*, has seven episodes, and starts on Czech Television on 11 January 2024. Host Aleš Najbrt will introduce viewers to leading graphic designers – not only pioneers of the field, but also contemporary creators who continue to shape the country's visual identity. **The more than 100 protagonists from the field of graphic design include figures such as typographer Zdeněk Ziegler** (in one of his last

interviews), respected graphic designer **Jiří Rathouský**, artist **Karel Teige**, as well as **Jan Solpera**, **Clara Istlerová**, and **Rostislav Vaněk**. The younger generation is represented by people such as **Tomáš Machek**, **Petr Babák**, **Robert V. Novák**, **Klára Kvízová**, **Tomáš Brousil**, **Marek Pistora**, and **Zuzana Lednická**. The series will also present graphic works by **Alfons Mucha**, **Ladislav Sutnar**, and **Vojtěch Preissig**, who are well-known abroad. The *Identita* series was co-produced by Czech Television and Mowshe.

Preview: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kdY7xQpjfQ8>

“The Identita series can definitely help public awareness of Czech graphic design. It’s important that it shows the best in graphic design. I think it’s mainly book design where we’re at a high level, as well as in the graphic design of posters – theater, film, and various cultural events,” says **series host Aleš Najbrt**.

Identita will be shown on Czech Television’s ČT art channel at 8:15 pm starting on 11 January and every Thursday until 22 February. The 40-minute episodes will also be available on the iVysílání service. The first episode, titled **Public Space**, shows the role visual communication plays, how it can help people find their way in an unfamiliar environment, and how to fight ‘visual smog’ today. Using the example of changes in the orientation system of the Prague metro, it introduces people who have influenced the public space, such as Jiří Rathouský, Rostislav Vaněk, and Tomáš Machek. The **Media** episode presents publication titles considered progressive for their time, including the cult magazine *Živel*, which was the brainchild of graphic designer Klára Kvízová, and Karel Teige’s modernist magazine *ReD*. Legendary film posters from the ‘60s and ‘70s by Zdeňek Ziegler will also be presented. The third episode, titled **State and Propaganda**, is devoted to the country’s visual identity, the content of symbols, its emblems and the colors of the national flag. It also explores the misuse of graphic design as a propaganda tool.

In the series’ midpoint, the **Education** episode looks at the Comenia Script typeface and the level of graphic work in textbooks, as well as at schools offering studies in graphic design such as Prague’s UMPRUM, Brno’s VUT, Pilsen’s ZČU, Ústí nad Labem’s UJEP, and Zlín’s UTB. Graphic design is an integral part of culture, and its creators often work across different disciplines – that’s the topic of the fifth episode, **Borderlines and Gray Areas**. It will cover the work of the graphic designer, sculptor, author, and typographer Josef Váchal, and the relationship between graphic design and graffiti with the assistance of Vladimír 518, as well as an exploration of the phenomenon of samizdat with Karel Haloun. The penultimate episode, **Everyday Life**, presents the

design of objects used on a daily basis, such as banknotes, beer labels, and the ubiquitous Kofila candy wrappers from Zdeněk Rykr's studio. Finally, the seventh episode looks at **Czechs in the World**, and summarizes the achievements of Czech graphic designers who have always been among the world's leaders. Along with the art of Alfons Mucha and the work of Ladislav Sutnar, a pioneer of modern visual communication, it will focus on the contemporary generation enjoying success abroad. Every episode of *Identita* includes two highlights dedicated to the most important creators. iVysílání is preparing **three bonus videos** in addition to the series, which present topics related to Czech graphic design – 'visual smog,' tattoos, and calligraphy.

*"Czech graphic design is made of equal parts brains, elegance and humor, and mapping it out in seven 40-minute episodes is of course an impossible task. That's why we start not chronologically, but by topic. After talking with the scriptwriter, and especially with expert advisors Linda Kudrnovská and Filip Blažek, we continuously reassessed this approach. Our aim was to select certain 'case studies' that would provide a better perspective on the field," says director **Jakub Skalický**. He has always worked on shows whose visual aspect was unmistakable, such as the well-known series *Paskvil* from the 1990s. The project's creators and expert advisors are design theoretician **Linda Kudrnovská**, typographer and educator **Filip Blažek**, scriptwriter **Petr Hauzírek**, **Czech Television** creative producer **Martina Šantavá**, and **Michal Gregorini** of the **Mowshe** company.*

When asked what the term *identita* means, Linda Kudrnovská of the creators' team had this to say: *"Identita is a concept that connects the world of graphic design with the rest of the universe, because it means the same thing everywhere: A set of elements that help to build and communicate the integrity and character of each entity. This is true for individuals or an entire country, a private gallery or a multinational corporation. The visual identity of individual subjects then forms the visual identity of the environment, and that in turn influences the identity of everyone who lives in it."*

The TV series *Identita – the story of Czech graphic design* is part of a large-scale project of the same name that pays tribute to Czech graphic design and includes an upcoming exhibition, a narrative monograph, and a feature-length documentary film. The *Identita* project's visual style was created by **Studio Marvil (Olga Benešová, Jiří Karásek, Tereza Saitzová)**, and **Tomáš Brousil** created a special typeface for it.

Partners of the *Identita* project include the Baudiš family, the Bakala Foundation, the Lanik company, Jiří Polidar, the Czech National Bank,

Czech Centres, the Czech Union of Graphic Design, Typo, Swann Auction Galleries, Bontonfilm, the US Embassy in the Czech Republic, the State Printing Works of Securities, Mat Film Resort, the Municipal Library in Prague, the Moravian Gallery in Brno, Museum Kampa, the Museum of Czech Literature, the National Library, the Military History Institute Prague, the City of Prague, the Academy of Arts Architecture and Design in Prague, Tomas Bata University in Zlín, J. E. Purkyně University in Ústí nad Labem, the Brno University of Technology, and the University of West Bohemia. Financial support was also provided by the Czech Film Fund, the Prague Audiovisual Fund, the South Moravian Film Fund, the Zlín Region, and the Pilsen Region. Find out more at www.projektidentita.cz.

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Identita – the story of Czech graphic design

projektidentita.cz | [instagram.com/projektidentita](https://www.instagram.com/projektidentita)

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Identita – the story of Czech graphic design television series

The *Identita* series introduces viewers to the history of Czech graphic design in seven episodes. Not only will we explore together the development of the Czechoslovak Republic's visual identity – its face – but we'll also reveal what is hidden behind the symbols, emblems, and colors that represent it. The series will take us through fascinating stories of the creation of the country's first banknotes, the national flag, the first Czech fonts, and legendary trade marks. We'll look at period magazines, books with incredible graphic design, and legendary film posters. We'll move through time into the post-1968 'normalization' period, printed propaganda, and designs for the Prague metro's orientation system, up to the present day with designs for logotypes, labels, digital and motion graphics for television and internet projects. The series presents the most important graphic designers, both living and deceased, who have together shaped what we now consider the country's visual identity.

Expert advisors and concept: Linda Kudrnovská, Filip Blažek

Scriptwriter: Petr Hauzírek

Director: Jakub Skalický

Cinematography: Petr Racek

Host: Aleš Najbrt

Czech TV Creative Producer: Martina Šantavá

Producer: Michal Gregorini

Episode synopses:

Episode 1 – Public Space

We're surrounded by letters. Graphic design dominates the public space, and it helps people to find their way in unfamiliar places. *Identita's* first episode shows the role visual communication plays today, and how it can help people orient themselves in an unfamiliar environment. Viewers are introduced to the term 'visual smog,' and the ways cities fight it today. The audience gets to know creators who have had an influence on shaping the public space: This episode introduces the work of designers such as Jiří Rathouský, Rostislav Vaňek, and Tomáš Machek.

Featuring: Jiří Rathouský, Rostislav Vaněk

Episode 2 – Media

The media underwent a fundamental transformation in the 20th century. But what hasn't changed is the fact that its visual appearance was determined by graphic designers. That is why we will present several exceptional print publications. The *Identita* series' second episode also introduces Czech film posters from the the '60s and '70s which enchanted the world, and which we still admire today. We get to know the posters' creators, such as Zdeněk Ziegler and Karel Vaca. Viewers also learn about the fundamental transformation graphic design is undergoing today.

Featuring: Karel Teige, Zdeněk Ziegler

Episode 3 – State and Propaganda

Throughout the 20th century, graphic design played a part in creating history, from the state symbols that form one of the cornerstones of Czech nationhood to propaganda in darker times. The second part of the episode introduces viewers to the visual appearance of key moments in Czech history, which artists such as Vojtěch Preissig and Jaroslav Benda helped to create. We also look at the misuse of graphic design by the totalitarian regime, which turned it into a propaganda tool. But even in difficult times, there were designers who lived and worked and pushed through unique projects, such as the Brussels style of the late 1950s. Part of the Czech Republic's visual identity also includes its visual presentation; professional designers consider whether the state's communication meets the needs and tastes of the 21st century.

Featuring: Vojtěch Preissig, Jaroslav Benda

Episode 4 – Education

Graphic art has shaped our personalities since childhood. Everyone remembers their first alphabet book and the handwriting they learned in elementary school. In the fourth episode of the *Identita* series, we introduce the design of a new model for teaching handwriting – the Comenia Script font. We also focus on books and their designers: Both on exceptional personalities of the 20th century such as František Muzika and Oldřich Hlavsa, as well as contemporary designers who have won awards in the Most Beautiful Books of the Czech Republic competition. Iva Knobloch presents a critical perspective on the low quality of textbooks. The episode wouldn't be complete without a look at the network of professional universities that have been dedicated to graphic design for more than 100 years. Representatives of these institutions discuss how teaching has changed and the prospects graduates face. The discussion includes representatives of the Academy of Arts Architecture and Design in Prague, the Brno University of Technology, the University of West Bohemia, J.E. Purkyně University in Ústí nad Labem, and Tomas Bata University in Zlín.

Featuring: František Muzika, Oldřich Hlavsa

Episode 5 – Borderlines and Gray Areas

Graphic design is an integral part of culture, and its creators often work across different disciplines. In this episode we present an extraordinary personality, the graphic designer, sculptor, author and typographer Josef Váchal, who made a significant mark in the field. We also take a look at graphic design from the other side: 'Creativity' from amateur designers, which grows like weeds in Czech cities. Radek Sidun tells us how to fight mistakes. Vladimír 518 reflects on the relationship between graphic design and graffiti. Together with Karel Haloun and Viktor Karlík we evaluate the phenomenon of samizdat and its importance for the visual culture of the 1980s. Joska Skalník shows specific works from the period. Artists who move on the borders between art, typography and graphic design include the typographer and musician František Štorm, whose fonts have conquered the world, and Robert V. Novák, whose adaptation of the psalter for the Trappist Order won the Czech Grand Design award.

Featuring: František Štorm, Karel Haloun

Episode 6 – Everyday Life

Every day from morning till night we're surrounded by the work of graphic designers and typographers, but the average person might not even be aware of it. The sixth episode of the *Identita* series reminds viewers what graphic design is: From postage stamps, to the visual identity of cultural institutions, to product packaging. And by the way, who wouldn't know the famous candies that still use Zdeněk Rykr's work. We'll focus in detail on

specific works that have become etched in Czechs' memories, whether it be Oldřich Kulhánek's banknotes or the work of Jan Solpera. In this episode, we present the diverse aspects of a graphic designer's job, as well as the technological changes that the profession has undergone in the past 100 years.

Featuring: Zdenek Rykr, Jan Solpera

Episode 7 – Czechs in the World

Czech graphic designers have always been among the world's best, which is why in this episode we look back at the work of Alphonse Mucha as well as Ladislav Sutnar, who became so famous in the United States that he is considered a pioneer of modern visual communication. Czech graphic design in the world is primarily represented by type designers, and viewers get to know the unique work of Tomáš Brousil, Veronika Burian, Vojtěch Říha, and Martin Vácha. The episode also recalls the International Biennale of Graphic Design, which has been held in the Czech Republic since 1963 thanks to its founder, Jan Rajlich Sr. But the youngest generation isn't left behind. They're communicating actively with a globalized world and are taking home numerous awards in international competitions.

Featuring: Ladislav Sutnar, Oldřich Menhart