

IPT 2021 Second Screening (Selection of Prize-Winning Posters) Judging Comments



This text was written by Toyama Prefectural Museum of Art and Design staff and summarizes the opinions expressed by jury members Shin Matsunaga, Katsumi Asaba, Taku Satoh and Ken Miki during a discussion which took place after the IPT 2021 second screening held on July 7, 2021.

As we hold the IPT 2021 in the midst of the unprecedented global pandemic of Covid-19, we not only feel a renewed sense of appreciative wonder at the 5943 submissions we received from 64 countries and regions, but also a sense of purpose in making sure that the IPT goes on. The works selected for this IPT were a strong reminder of the poster's role as a form of media that reflects the state of our society, and in this and many other ways, the IPT 2021 is one that we will not soon forget.

In the second screening, the judges cast votes for prize-winning works in Category A, Category B, and finally the U30 + Student Category. This year, travel restrictions made it impossible for us to invite overseas judges to the second screening, which unfortunately deprived us of the opportunity to exchange opinions with our colleagues from overseas, but the four Japanese judges conducted exhaustive discussions to ensure that the prizes went to a deserving selection of works.

The IPT 2021 Grand Prix was awarded to Martin Woodtli for "VideoEx 2018

Experimental Film & Video Festival Zurich Switzerland.” While this poster was not one that immediately monopolized our attention, we found its lively visuals drawing our eyes more and more as we began to narrow our choices during the judging process. The poster’s typography is half-concealed within the manga speech bubble-like shapes which seem to jump out at the viewer, and its unique depth and dynamism make it a fitting poster for a film festival. The poster’s greatest appeal seemed to lie in the fact that the artist did not forcibly try to coalesce the various visual elements of the design together, but instead allowed himself the freedom to experiment as he wished. In the midst of the difficult and trying times the world is currently going through, this attempt to achieve something new more than made up for any minor lack of polish the poster may have exhibited.

The Gold, Silver and Bronze prizes included multiple posters from Switzerland, a country with a long history of poster design, as well as China, one of the Asian countries we see increasingly flexing their designing prowess. The “70th Anniversary of China” posters from Gold Prize recipient Junyi Lu (China) were composed solely of the words “China,” in English or Chinese characters, and numbers signifying the size of the font. While this was not a new methodology, it was very skillfully employed to deliver an expression devoid of any emotion or loquaciousness, and the hard-hitting impact of its conveyance of certain facts allows for many interpretations. Ralph Schraivogel (Switzerland) also received a Gold Prize for his “Knowledge in Images” exhibition poster, which features the exhibition title surfacing from a design of many systematically-placed points connected by intricate webs of lines. His original approach to typography reveals a designer continually engaged in the pursuit of expression that is powerful and always fresh.

In “Victory,” Silver Prize recipient He Huang (China) gets to the heart of things by utilizing purely visual expression that eliminates any and all printed characters. The image of the severed tree stump fingers of a hand making the V-sign imparts a pain that can be shared by the viewer, and this design, which is not without some irony, forcefully presents the question of what it means for humans or nature to achieve “victory,” and what sacrifice entails. Super Terrain (France) was also awarded a Silver Prize for a poster which possesses an originality that helped it to stand out from the other first screening selections which likewise made use of photographs in their design, and its photographs, informational typography and other elements are intertwined into a richly colored whole. The Category B Silver

Prize was awarded to Nanako Ueda (Japan) for “Women in Japan 2021.” This work is notable for the way it portrays women in modern Japanese society from the standpoint of this year’s IPT theme of “invisible,” and also for its use of a visual illusion that integrates this perspective into its design.

We believe that the Bronze Prize recipients comprise a good balance of works which reflect both the efforts on the part of long-time IPT applicants to newly innovate their poster design, and also the vast potential of poster expression as a visual language demonstrated by the next generation of poster designers. 1890 works were submitted to the U30 + Student Category on the same “invisible” theme as the paper Category B posters, and the level of the selected submissions has risen considerably. The U30 + Student Category Gold Prize was awarded to Tomoya Soejima (Japan) for “Shout Blindly,” a powerful illustration of an appeal to something unseen that irresistibly draws the eye.

As we went about the judging, we were very conscious of the poster’s function as a medium of visual communication, as well its ability to appeal to us aesthetically. Function, and aesthetic appeal. The prize-winning posters managed to avoid overdevelopment in just one of these areas and integrated these two elements in a well-balanced way, while submissions that excited us visually but seemed to lack the functional utility of posters did not find themselves in the final group of candidates.

In the museum exhibition halls, we took on the 400 posters displayed before us. We saw applicants from Poland and other European countries in search of something new that lies beyond the history and traditions of posters, along with applicants from rapidly-blossoming Asian regions who are seeking to open entirely new frontiers. Veteran designers with solid careers and proven abilities competed alongside the students and young designers who will lead the next generation, showing us how the IPT’s journey continues to march forward.

These posters filled the IPT exhibition halls with a powerful energy that cannot be conveyed through a digital monitor, reminding us of why we have always maintained the IPT as a competition of posters in paper format. What we see each time could be described as a melting pot of visual communication, or perhaps a stroll through the world of the poster. The IPT transcends differences in language, culture and expression to serve as an inspirational venue which illustrates how designers around the world continue to grapple with the times we live in.