

Christmas Cards

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This drawing on textile for a Christmas card was designed in 1960 by the Swiss graphic designer Guido Weber, one of the employees of Studio Hollenstein. [Fig. 116] Based in Paris, this Studio was founded in 1957 and was managed by the Swiss-trained typographer Albert Hollenstein. The drawing represents the employees grouped together in Santa's sleigh, positioning them as playful subjects. Albert Hollenstein is identifiable by his haircut and glasses, and is represented alone on the reindeer, leading the sleigh. The separation between the employees and Hollenstein is clearly manifested, and also evidenced by the textual information included on the Christmas card: "Hollenstein and his team." This reflects both the hierarchical organization of the Studio and its collective dimension. The team appeared as a visual, discursive strategy to position the Studio as a collective, professional structure in opposition to the individual graphic design artist. In the early 1960s, a growing awareness about the shifting status of the graphic designer was expressed within the graphic design community. For example, in 1962, the journal *Techniques graphiques* published a special issue entitled "Positions et propositions de

graphistes" (Positions and suggestions of graphic designers), featuring articles discussing the role and status of the graphic designer.¹ In his article entitled "Le graphiste aujourd'hui" (The graphic designer today), the French practitioner Roger Excoffon (1910–1983) stresses the necessity of making a clear distinction between the "graphiste" and the artist, arguing that "it seems essential to illuminate this division in the interest of the graphic designer, to give his work a more lucid 'audience.'" He further mentions the main aspect which differentiates the artist from the graphic designer: the latter is engaged in the economic cycle and works in a team, unlike the artist who works alone in his studio.² The representation of Hollenstein as a team reflects an intention to depict the Studio as a commercial structure. This aspect is also illustrated in the hand drawing produced for a Christmas card in 1960 by Kurt Weibel at the Studio Hollenstein (1957–1974). [Fig. 117] It depicts the team, spread out over the two floors of the Studio. In the bottom left-hand corner of the document, one can observe the typographers composing texts in front of a metal type case, while in the bottom right-hand corner, other employees are working in the photography lab. The illustrators, *maquettistes*, and graphic designers are located on the first floor at the top of the document, along with the administrative staff (photographic material in the archives has confirmed that this was indeed where they all

worked). Hollenstein used to call his team "a chain of specialists grouped in a structure,"³ which is well illustrated in this drawing. This "chain of specialists" corresponds to a rationalized working system stemming from scientific management methods developed by the American Frederick Taylor in the early 20th century. These methods were introduced to France through different channels, including American advertising agencies in Paris.⁴ As many studies have highlighted, the American agency provided an organizational model for French practitioners in the creative industries.⁵ This representation of Hollenstein's "chain of specialists" on a Christmas card can be seen as a means of promoting the Studio as an efficient structure, able to cover a full range of services.

- 1 See "Visualiste," in the volume *Tempting Terms*.
- 2 Excoffon 1962: 22.
- 3 Albert Hollenstein's notes, Hugues Hollenstein archives, Tours.
- 4 Martin 1992: 287.
- 5 See Chessel 1998; Leymonerie 2016.



Fig. 116 Christmas card, Guido Weber/Studio Hollenstein, drawing on textile, ca. 1960.

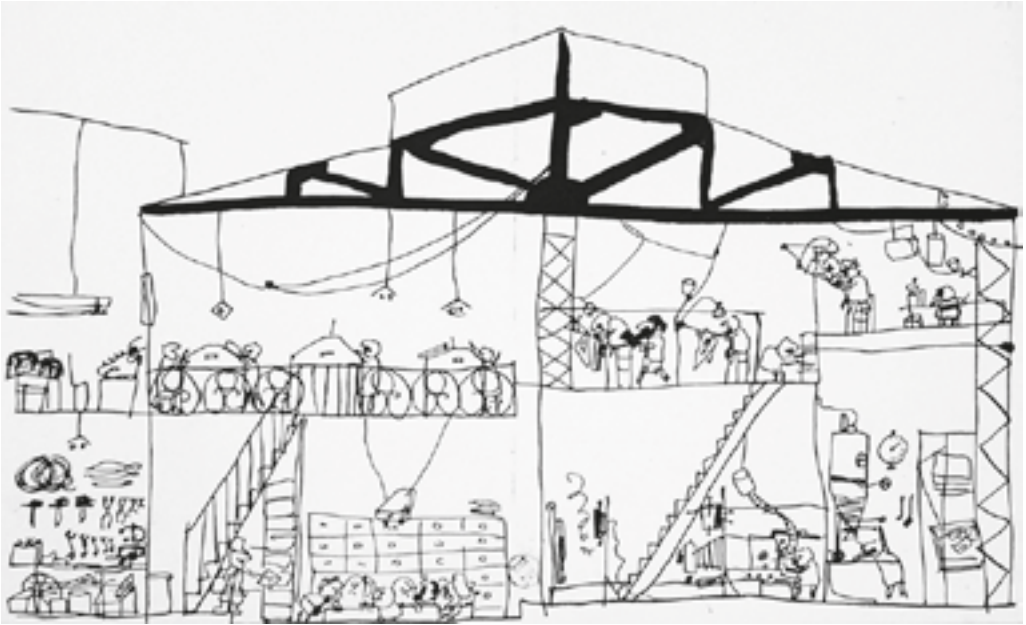


Fig. 117 Christmas card, Kurt Weibel/Studio Hollenstein, pencil on paper, 1960.