

# Location

Constance Delamadeleine

Choosing the geographical location where one wants to practice is a career decision that can sometimes lead one to move places, either within one's own country or beyond it. Recently, design historians have turned their attention to the transnational migration of designers by focusing on the ways in which they actively shaped the visual and design culture of a specific location, in a specific period, or were themselves shaped by it.<sup>1</sup> An analysis of visual artifacts produced by migrant designers is often the approach privileged in such accounts. This section provides a more comprehensive picture of the professional and social experience of Swiss designers who moved within and without their country, from the postwar period to the present day; we here focus less on their actual products.

In Switzerland, moving abroad for a short or a longer period was a common practice among graphic designers and typographers, and has remained so. More often than not, such decisions are career-oriented. They move in order to pursue their studies, to create or expand their professional networks, to search for new sources of inspiration in a different cultural and artistic center, or to get access to a niche market

that is not available in their hometown. As recalled by Ursula Hiestand and Lora Lamm, moving abroad after their studies seems to have been a mandatory step in their career. According to them, Milan or Paris were the two preferred options. These two cities were hotspots for Swiss graphic design, as Hanspeter Bisig and Niklaus Troxler have already confirmed. Swiss designers often came to work for other Swiss practitioners who were already established in their new homes; those who did not, automatically linked up with each other, according to Serge Libiszewski. Working abroad occasionally became a regular aspect of professional practice, especially after the development of the low-cost airlines in the 1990s that facilitated transnational movement in Europe. Some designers developed collaborations spanning several locations, or even relocated their practice abroad. However, recent migration has not focused on specific foreign centers as had been the case with Paris and Milan in the postwar period.

While migration within the same linguistic space frequently occurs (as was the case with the studio Hi, which moved from Lucerne to Zurich), mobility between two different linguistic regions remained limited, at least in the 1990s and 2000s. The following selections from our interviews reveal how graphic design culture in Switzerland is not as homogeneous as it is often portrayed in the literature, but varied within and between the different linguis-

tic regions. Zurich, Lucerne, and Lausanne are here identified as distinct design scenes that are not necessarily connected to one another, despite the small size of the country as a whole. This is partly due to the absence of any transregional network, and to the lack of design exchange between the regions. However, Gilles Gavillet and Stéphane Delgado initiated a project that facilitated a dialogue between different national scenes. The production of the magazine *Welcomex* in the mid-1990s was a means for creating interconnections within and beyond these different cultural scenes and to “break the insularity of Lausanne.”<sup>2</sup> This magazine was a platform to publish and disseminate innovative work by designers, photographers, and

artists based in different locations. A connection was made with the Zurich photographic scene through the intermediary of Cornel Windlin’s 1996 catalog for *Die Klasse*, an exhibition featuring photographers from the Kunstgewerbeschule Zürich (Zurich School of Arts and Crafts). Several works produced by one of those photographers were published in the first issue of *Welcomex* (1997).

The excerpts from our interviews selected here present multiple forms of relations between geographical spaces and a designer’s practice. These may include the physical circulation of people, and connections between national and international design scenes through the means of graphic design.

1 Junod et al. 2016; Buckley & Hochscherf 2012; Chatelain 2008; Clarke & Shapira 2017;

2 Engelke & Hochscherf 2015; Fornari 2016; Richter 2007. Berthod 2018b.

## Niklaus Troxler

Conversation with Constance Delamadeleine, Sursee, Oct. 10, 2017.

NT Un de mes maîtres était Hans-Rudolf Lutz. J’avais envie d’aller à Paris et Lutz m’a suggéré de contacter Hollenstein. Il n’a pas regardé mon travail, il m’a engagé tout de suite. À l’époque, à l’atelier il n’y avait que deux Suisses, moi et une autre femme de Saint-Gall. Avant il y avait beaucoup de Suisses. D’abord, c’était une fabrication de typographie jour et nuit.

Quand j'étais là, il y avait Peter Knapp également, c'était une grande vedette. Je voulais d'abord aller à Paris pour la musique car tous les Jazzmen américains étaient venus à Paris. Finalement le graphisme français m'a aussi inspiré comme Savignac et Ciešlewicz. Il y avait aussi un ami, Joseph Leubi, diplômé en 1971, qui est venu aussi à Paris chez Jean Widmer. Paris et Milan étaient des cités suisses du graphisme. En France, c'était du graphisme d'illustration et pas de typographie. Paris était une étape importante dans ma carrière.

NT One of my teachers was Hans-Rudolf Lutz. I wanted to go to Paris and Lutz suggested that I contact Hollenstein. He didn't look at my work; he hired me right away. At that time, there were only two Swiss people in the workshop, me and another woman from St. Gallen. Before that there were many Swiss people. First, we were working day and night on typography. When I was there, Peter Knapp was there too; he was a big star. I first wanted to go to Paris for music, because all the American jazzmen had come to Paris. Ultimately, French graphics also inspired me, like Savignac and Ciešlewicz. I also had a friend, Joseph Leubi, who graduated in 1971 and also came to Paris to work for Jean Widmer. Paris and Milan were Swiss cities of graphic design. In France, it was graphic design for illustrations, and not typography. Paris was an important milestone in my career.

### Hanspeter Bisig

Conversation with Constance Delamadeleine, Sursee,  
Oct. 11, 2017.

HB Si on souhaitait faire un stage ou travailler à Paris, on nous recommandait d'aller soit chez Frutiger soit chez Hollenstein. Hollenstein était réputé à Lucerne. Mon travail consistait principalement à composer au plomb les épreuves.

J'aidais également Hans-Rudolf Lutz dans la préparation des cours qui étaient dispensés dans la cave du studio le soir. J'ai aussi assisté à ces cours dans lesquels on apprenait le graphisme suisse [...].

Paris était la Mecque pour la typographie suisse, plus tard on a parlé de la mafia suisse. Par exemple l'Helvetica était considéré comme l'Alpha et l'Omega. Quand on avait beaucoup d'intérêt pour la typographie, on allait à Paris, c'était un pôle important et aussi une ligne directe du Bauhaus suisse-alsacien à Paris, puisque nos maîtres de Lucerne étaient influencés par l'école allemande.

HB If we wanted to do an internship or work in Paris, we were recommended to go to either Frutiger or Hollenstein. Hollenstein was famous in Lucerne. My work mainly consisted of composing the proofs with lead. I also helped Hans-Rudolf Lutz in the preparation of the courses that were given in the studio cellar on evenings. I also attended these courses in which we learned Swiss graphic design [...].

Paris was the Mecca for Swiss typography; later on we used to talk about the Swiss mafia. For example, Helvetica was considered to be the Alpha and Omega. When we had a lot of interest in typography, we went to Paris; it was an important pole and also a direct line from the Swiss-German Bauhaus to Paris, since our masters in Lucerne were influenced by the German school.

Gérard Ifert

Conversation with Constance Delamadeleine,  
Saint-Mandé, May 30, 2017.

GI Dans le contexte d'après-guerre, l'économie s'est accélérée en Europe. Les graphistes suisses formés à Bâle et Zurich étaient appréciés en France et les raisons pour cela se trouvent

dans l'enseignement de la profession complètement restructuré pendant la guerre en Suisse. Dans les deux écoles, la formation de graphistes comprenait un nouveau département, dit "fabrication". Ce département composé de plusieurs spécialisations: façonnage (reliure), composition (plomb), impression (lithographie, offset et presse-typo) mettait l'élève dans les situations réelles. Le fait d'opérer, manoeuvrer les machines et observer les incidences sur le résultat fini, complétait le savoir du créateur. Le fait de savoir travailler avec l'imprimeur et le relieur, de parler leur langage était un atout considérable. Le choix du procédé et la connaissance des délais de fabrication faisaient partie du métier. Le client pouvait alors confier un travail global et non plus partiel. Par exemple, la mission de Peter Knapp comme directeur artistique chez ELLE dépassait largement la tâche du maquettiste. C'est sur cette panoplie des connaissances professionnelles que se jouait la différence (à l'époque) entre un graphiste formé en suisse et un graphiste formé en France.

GI In the postwar context, the economy accelerated in Europe. Swiss graphic designers trained in Basel and Zurich were appreciated in France and the reasons for this are to be found in how the profession was taught, which was completely restructured during the war in Switzerland. In both schools, the training of graphic designers included a new department, called "manufacturing." This department was composed of several specializations: shaping (binding), composition (lead), printing (lithography, offset and press typing), and they put the student in real-life situations. Operating the machines and observing the impact on the finished result completed the designer's knowledge. Knowing how to work with the printer and bookbinder and speaking their language was a considerable asset. The choice of process and knowledge of manufacturing deadlines were part of the job. The client could then entrust us with a global job instead of a partial one. For example, Peter Knapp's mission as artistic director at ELLE

went far beyond the task of the paste-up artist. It was this range of professional knowledge that made the difference (at the time) between a graphic designer trained in Switzerland and a graphic designer trained in France.

### Serge and Nanette Libiszewski

Conversation with Chiara Barbieri, Milan, Oct. 4, 2017.

NL Chissà se tu e [Walter] Ballmer foste rimasti in Svizzera, dove non c'erano industriali illuminati come Olivetti e la Rinascente, chissà cosa avreste fatto? Qui [a Milano] c'erano clienti che lasciavano all'artista la libertà di esprimersi anche nella pubblicità.

SL Sì, si veniva volentieri a Milano perché c'erano clienti come Olivetti, la Rinascente e Pirelli, che avevano enormi disponibilità [economiche], sapevano scegliere la gente giusta e poi la lasciavano fare. Non dovevi spiegare nulla, neanche fare un preventivo!

NL What if you and [Walter] Ballmer had stayed in Switzerland, where there were no forward-looking companies like Olivetti and la Rinascente, what would you have done then? Here [in Milan] there were clients who gave the artists the freedom to express themselves, also in advertising.

SL Yes, we gladly moved to Milan since there was a small number of clients—like Olivetti, la Rinascente, and Pirelli—with huge means who knew how to select the right people and then gave them free rein. You didn't have to explain a thing, nor even provide a quote!

## Fritz Gottschalk

Conversation with Chiara Barbieri, Zurich,  
Mar. 22, 2018.

FG The much more important thing is that [Walter Ballmer] took his basic education, which was Swiss, I mean he is a Basel guy, [and] he not only took that to Milan, but he also amalgamated it with the Italian or the Milanese way of living at the very high level. That's what impressed me so much with him. [...] But he had a fantastic reputation. He was probably considered stubborn and rigid and Swiss and all the rest, but he managed to bring Italy and Switzerland together in the most beautiful way!

## Serge and Nanette Libiszewski

Conversation with Chiara Barbieri, Milan, Oct. 4, 2017.

SL Allora [negli anni Sessanta] i grafici e fotografi svizzeri [a Milano] si conoscevano tutti. C'erano solo due studi interessanti: Boggeri e Grignani, che si sono sempre alimentati di grafici svizzeri. E lì, da Boggeri, sono passati tutti. Anche Ballmer, che poi si è fermato a Milano. Quando arrivavano nuovi svizzeri in città, ci si incontrava automaticamente. Magari poi ci si frequentava anche, chi di più chi di meno.

SL At that time [in the 1960s], the Swiss graphic designers and photographers [in Milan] knew each other. There were only two interesting studios, Boggeri and Grignani, who had always fed themselves with Swiss graphic designers. Everyone went through [Studio] Boggeri, also Ballmer made a stopover there. Whenever there was a new Swiss in town, we would automatically meet and we would eventually hang out together, more or less.

## Armando Milani

Conversation with Chiara Barbieri, Feb. 13, 2018.

AM Essere svizzeri in Italia in quegli anni [sessanta e settanta] era sicuramente un valore, un più che ha aiutato Walter Ballmer e la sua carriera. Gli svizzeri e grafica svizzera erano molto stimati in Italia.

AM To be Swiss in Italy during those years [1960s–70s] was certainly valuable. It was a plus that helped Walter Ballmer and his career. Swiss designers and Swiss graphic design were highly appreciated in Italy.

## Ursula Hiestand

Conversation with Chiara Barbieri and Robert Lzicar,  
Zurich, Dec. 4, 2017.

CB Comment étaient perçus Milan et le graphisme italien depuis la Suisse?

UH Zu meiner Zeit, 1960, ist man nach der Schule entweder nach Mailand oder Paris gegangen. Uns zog es nach Paris; mich zu Jean Widmer, Ernst an eine Kunstschule und danach zum Grafiker- Ehepaar Bucher-Cromières.

CB How were Milan and Italian graphic design perceived in Switzerland?

UH In my time, 1960, you went to either Milan or Paris. We chose Paris. I went to Jean Widmer, Ernst went to art school and then to the married designer couple Bucher-Cromières.



## Lora Lamm

Conversation with Chiara Barbieri and Davide Fornari,  
Zurich, Mar. 7, 2018.

LL C'erano due possibilità dopo la scuola per i grafici svizzeri: Parigi o Milano. Sono dei Grigioni e quindi ho preferito Milano ... All'epoca, essere svizzeri in Milano era una carta da visita. Ci guardavano come dei profeti!

LL For Swiss graphic designers after school there were two options: either Paris or Milan. I am from the Canton of Graubünden, so I opted for Milan ... To be Swiss in Milan at that time was a calling card. They looked at us like we were prophets!

## Fulvio Ronchi

Conversation with Chiara Barbieri, Milan, Mar. 19, 2017.

FR Perché la grafica a Milano era, tu eri l'esplosione dell'uomo riuscito, dell'uomo di successo. Poi avevano delle belle macchine, [Giulio] Confalonieri aveva una Jaguar MK2 particolarissima, [Giancarlo] Iliprandi girava con dei Porsche incredibili. Erano tutti circondati da modelle.

FR In Milan graphic design was—you were the epitome of the successful man. They owned beautiful cars: [Giulio] Confalonieri owned a very special Jaguar MK2, [Giancarlo] Iliprandi would drive around in unbelievable Porsches. They were all surrounded by top models.

## Fulvio Ronchi

Conversation with Chiara Barbieri, Milan, Mar. 19, 2017.

FR Era la collaborazione tra svizzeri e italiani a rendere i progetti interessanti. Durante i quattro anni di lavoro per [Walter] Ballmer, il suo modo era completamente diverso rispetto al mio, al mio calore. Questo portava a un conflitto di progetto che alla fine portava a qualcosa di più interessante dal punto di vista visivo. [...] io ero mediterraneo mentre lui era logaritmico. Lui giustificava tutto con le misure [...] Tu puoi giustificare tutto con la misura aurea però poi non mi piace.

FR It was the collaboration between Swiss and Italian designers that made the design projects interesting. During the four years that I worked for [Walter] Ballmer, his approach was completely different from mine; I had a hotter temperament. This led to a design conflict that at the end would bring about something more interesting from a visual point of view [...] I was Mediterranean while he was logarithmic. He justified everything with measurements. You can relate everything to the golden section, but at the end of the day I don't like it.

## Gilles Gavillet

Conversations with Jonas Berthod, Geneva, Apr. 6, 2017 and Jan. 31, 2018.

GG Le [premier] *Welcomex* est intéressant car c'est un moment où on se connecte avec la scène zurichoise, notamment avec Cornel [Windlin]. C'est en 1997. On publie des photographes zurichois que l'on a découverts dans *Die Klasse* publié par le Museum für Gestaltung. *Die Klasse* fut un livre important pour notre génération et a renouvelé notre rapport avec la photographie Suisse, notamment grâce à

l'apparition de cette nouvelle scène zurichoise. Bien que nous suivions Thomas Ruff et la scène allemande, *Die Klasse* réunissait le regard photographique de gens de notre génération avec un regard photographique extrêmement brut par rapport à ce qu'on connaissait préalablement dans les années 1990. Bref, c'est un livre qui nous a marqués.

JB C'est donc *Die Klasse* qui vous a connectés avec Zurich?

GG Plutôt avec la scène photographique zurichoise. La musique nous a connectés à Zurich avant cela. La Rote Fabrik était très dynamique à l'époque, et opère souvent en tandem avec la Dolce Vita lausannoise. Quand Cornel rentre de Londres [en 1993], il arrive avec un langage visuel très différent de ce qui est proposé avant à Zurich, et évidemment en Suisse romande. Cornel réalise les affiches pour la Rote Fabrik ... et aussi pour un club privé, le Reefer Madness [...]. J'y suis allé une fois et y découvre des objets graphiques très élaborés [pour les membres du club], comme des cartes de crédit Reefer Madness.

GG The [first] *Welcomex* was interesting because it was a moment when we connected with the Zurich scene, especially with Cornel [Windlin]. That was in 1997. We published Zurich photographers whom we had discovered in *Die Klasse* [1996], which was published by the Museum für Gestaltung. *Die Klasse* was an important book for our generation and renewed our relationship with Swiss photography, especially thanks to the emergence of that new Zurich scene. Although we followed Thomas Ruff and the German scene, *Die Klasse* brought together the photographic gaze of people of our generation with an extremely raw photographic look compared to what we had known before in the 1990s. In short, it's a book that made quite an impression on us.

JB So it was *Die Klasse* that connected you with Zurich?

GG Rather with the Zurich photographic scene. Music connected us to Zurich before that. The Rote Fabrik was very dynamic at the time, and often operated in tandem with the Dolce Vita of Lausanne. When Cornel returned from London [in 1993], he came back with a very different visual language than what was offered before in Zurich, and of course very different from French-speaking Switzerland. Cornel designed the posters for the Rote Fabrik ... and also for a private club, Reefer Madness [...]. I went there once and discovered some very elaborate graphic objects [for club members], such as Reefer Madness credit cards.\*

### Gilles Gavillet

Conversation with Jonas Berthod, Geneva, Apr. 6, 2017.

JB Ton travail à l'école était donc ancré dans les théories de l'art. C'est intéressant, parce que je pensais que des gens comme Hans-Rudolf Lutz avaient eu une influence.

GG Je découvre le travail de Lutz plus tard. La scène de l'art contemporain est effectivement plus présente [comme référence]. Lutz, je ne l'ai rencontré qu'une seule fois, peut-être en 1997, avec Cornel [Windlin] qui m'emmène dans son atelier. Le lien [depuis Lausanne] à la scène lucernoise et cette approche postmoderne sont inexistants.

JB Tu penses que c'est lié à la langue, est-ce que vous êtes tournés plutôt vers la France?

\* See Fischbacher & Lzicar 2015: 465.

GG Non, il y a d'une part une diffusion de la culture graphique suisse plus limitée à l'époque, qui se limite aux publications de Lars Müller. Au niveau de la formation, l'ECAL est une école assez isolée à l'époque. Les professeurs travaillent dans des agences de publicité locales et les modèles d'enseignement très limités. Quand François Rappo arrive avec des références historiques et le mot "design graphique", c'est [un grand changement]. D'autre part, nous sommes davantage intéressés par le design graphique produit à Londres ou aux USA, davantage tournés vers les technologies digitales, qui opèrent un véritable changement dans les processus et possibilités de travail.

JB Le fait que tu ailles à Zurich travailler pour Cornel Windlin, c'était nouveau – les autres étudiants ne le faisaient pas forcément. Qu'est-ce qu'ils faisaient, ils allaient travailler dans des agences locales?

GG En effet, ils allaient souvent travailler dans des agences.

JB So your work at school was rooted in art theories. That's interesting, because I thought people like Hans-Rudolf Lutz had exerted an influence.

GG I discovered Lutz's work later. The contemporary art scene was indeed more present [as a reference point]. I only met Lutz once, maybe in 1997, with Cornel [Windlin], who took me to his studio. The link [from Lausanne] to the Lucerne scene and this postmodern approach was non-existent.

JB Do you think it's related to language, are you focused more towards France?

GG No, on the one hand, there was a more limited dissemination of Swiss graphic culture at the time, which was limited to the publications of Lars Müller. In terms of education, ECAL was a rather isolated school at the time. The lecturers worked in local advertising agencies and the pedagogical models were very limited. When François Rappo came along with historical references and the word "graphic design," it was [a big change]. Besides, we were more interested in graphic design produced in London or in the USA, more oriented towards digital technologies, which brought about a real change in work processes and possibilities.

JB The fact that you went to Zurich to work for Cornel Windlin was new—the other students didn't necessarily do it. What did they do, did they go and work for local agencies?

GG Indeed, they often went to work in agencies.

Hi (Megi Zumstein and Claudio Barandun)

Conversations with Jonas Berthod, Zurich, Apr. 6, 2017  
and Nov. 13, 2017.

JB You were based in Lucerne, and you stayed there [...] until October 2016, when you moved to Zurich. [...]

CB I think at this point of our career, [being] based in Lucerne or in Zurich—it's not so important.

JB [...] There's clearly a sort of "Basel scene," and then a "Zurich scene," and then a sort of "Suisse romande" scene ... and I'm trying to understand how that works. Do you feel like in Lucerne it was quite different to what is being done here in Zurich?

CB The way stuff looks, you mean? Yeah.

MZ Yeah, I think so. [...] I think in Lucerne they have a different style of posters hanging in the streets. More illustrative posters; less photographic posters like we have in Zurich.

JB Do you feel like maybe if you had started in Zurich, your work would be different?

MZ I think it was good for us that we worked in Lucerne, because it's much smaller so you have quicker access to different people or clients. If you can make a name for yourself, then you are known a bit quicker.

CB Ask anybody who's working for an institution or an artist [in Lucerne] and always, when somebody tells me we're making an exhibition for this or that person or artist, then we can say "oh we made a fanzine for that person" or "we made a book with them"—so I think [...] it was important because we were well-connected to a lot of people.

MZ But it was more friends-based. A lot of official people didn't know us by then.

CB Yes, sure. But we would have had different friends if we'd started in Zurich, maybe. So that also ... I'm not sure if the work would look very different.

MZ Ah, I don't know if the work would look different.

CB But actually we want to design stuff from the topic point of view and to build an ideal platform for the topic we're working for. So when the topic's different then probably also the style becomes different. I'm not sure if it would be because it's Zurich or Basel ... But surely you're influenced by your surroundings.