

# Training

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Graphic design education in Switzerland has been discussed in celebratory publications,<sup>1</sup> in monographs of designers who also worked as teachers,<sup>2</sup> and in self-published educational books in which graphic designers laid out their personal design and pedagogical theories.<sup>3</sup> All in all, design education has played a pivotal role in the construction of “Swiss graphic design” as a well-defined historiographical canon, with Basel, Zurich, and their respective design schools acting as key players in the articulation of this narrative.<sup>4</sup> Our interviewees reveal a more relatable and mundane approach to training that is closer to everyday experience than to any codified set of design principles and standards. They discuss design education from different perspectives that show how they have engaged with it at different moments of their career, while performing diverse roles: some recall their experience as students learning the practice at design school; others comment on ways in which they applied, adapted, and integrated their training in everyday practice; and others reflect on the benefits, responsibilities, and challenges of working as teachers. These interviews allow us to peek behind the walls of Swiss design schools,

with details about syllabuses and exercises conducted in the classroom and in the workshop. Many of the exercises recalled here were aimed at improving technical skills—drawing skills in particular—by training the eye and the hand while providing knowledge about the tools and materials of the practice.<sup>5</sup> The interviews touch upon issues related to new technologies and their impact on practice. Interviewees criticize the delayed response of design schools, which are accused of often being slow to catch up with ongoing technological change. The co-founders of NORM—Dimitri Bruni and Manuel Krebs—recall how, as students enrolling for a graphic design training, they were not completely clear about what graphic design actually was. Alas, their subsequent training apparently did not help students to clarify matters, leaving them unprepared for the real marketplace. On the one hand, their criticism echoes the enduring debate as to whether design education and training should be more market-oriented, or whether it should instead be aimed at expanding students’ cultural horizons, encouraging experimentation, and pushing boundaries in the safe environment of the school workshop.<sup>6</sup> On the other hand, the way these designers tell their stories tells us a lot about the more or less conscious way in which they want to portray themselves.<sup>7</sup> In the case of NORM, their account is also helpful in providing a context for a radical change in their practice.

They co-founded the illustration collective Silex while they were students, before changing their style radically when they launched their own studio.

These interviews inject new life into narratives around design education and training, and depict schools as lively environments that facilitated the development of networks and design exchange. It was at design school that some enduring partnerships began. This was the case with Dimitri Bruni and Manuel Krebs, who met while studying in Biel/Bienne and went on to found NORM together. Students, teachers, guest lecturers, and technicians participated in a complex network of practitioners that extended outside the schools themselves, and from which both students and teachers derived benefit.

The interviews confirm that being trained in Switzerland was an asset to designers—something on which they could capitalize in order to launch their careers abroad. Swiss graphic design and a Swiss design education were

meaningful concepts for a specific circle of foreign practitioners, clients, and design critics. This was the case, for example, in Milan and Paris in the postwar period. A number of graduates from Swiss educational institutions—mainly in Basel and Zurich—moved to either Milan or Paris, where they were sought after for their allegedly unsurpassed professional skills and technical abilities.<sup>8</sup> Swiss designers abroad acted as the bearers of a practical approach that they passed on to local practitioners, either on the job or through getting directly involved in design education. Yet some interviewees also point out alternative reference models of design training and practice, thereby offering evidence of a shifting historical and cultural context. Alternative models such as the Cranbrook Academy, Neville Brody, and David Carson are expressions of a shift towards a postmodernist approach to visual communication, which rejected strict rules and pre-established canons.

1 Budliger 1978; Hofmann & Weingart 1985; Musée de l'Athénée 1995; Hugli 1983.

2 Caffisch, Rüdlin & Wälchli 1973; Wichmann 1989; Bignens 2006.

3 Müller-Brockmann 1961; Hofmann 1965; Ruder 1965; Lutz 1987; 1997; Weingart 1999.

4 Morgenthaler 1971; Schwarz 2007.

5 Klein 2019.

6 Heller 2005.

7 Donnelly 2006: 290.

8 Richter 2007; 2011; Junod et al. 2016.

## Rudi Meyer

Conversation with Sandra Bischler, Mar. 7, 2018.

Rudi Meyer was a student of the Fachklasse für Graphik (Graphic Design Class) at the Allgemeine Gewerbeschule (AGS) Basel from 1959 to 1963, where he attended courses under Armin Hofmann, Donald Brun, Emil Ruder, and the artist Theo Eble, among others. Eble had begun teaching drawing courses at AGS as early as the 1930s. His naturalistic drawing method provided intensive eye-training, and was an important basis for a formally reduced style of graphic design. Other alumni of the Fachklasse für Graphik have described Eble as the “unofficial” third graphic design teacher, next to Hofmann and Brun. Despite his contribution to the education of Basel graphic designers, Eble still plays a minor role in the school’s narrative.

RM Prägend während der Ausbildung in der Fachklasse für Grafik waren die Bleistiftzeichnungen im Kurs “Licht und Schatten” bei Theo Eble, mit unzähligen Stunden Zeichenarbeit. Jeder Schüler suchte sich ein Objekt aus und der Zeichensaal wurde abgedunkelt bis auf eine einzige 1000 Watt-Glühbirne, die eine fast sakrale Stimmung erzeugt hat. Wir saßen in jeder Stunde am selben Platz und haben unglaublich detailliert unseren Gegenstand abgezeichnet. Eble brachte uns bei, wie man Bleistifte anspricht, wie man die verschiedenen Härtegrade anwendet und wie man mit kreisenden Bewegungen, ohne das Papier zu töten, den Untergrund “behandelt”. Daraus hat er eine Art Pädagogik entwickelt. [Fig. 37]

Man lernte dabei eine strenge Beobachtungsweise. Zum Beispiel sah man plötzlich, wie ein gezeichneter Schatten sich am Rande leicht abdunkelt, wenn er gegen das weisse Papier stösst, und deshalb etwas aufgehellt werden muss. Man verglich und wertete die Unterschiede. Das war eine grundlegende Schulung des Auges, und daher enorm wichtig für die spätere

Arbeit als Grafiker. In Ebles Kurs spielte etwas hinein, das eigentlich gar nicht mehr so recht ins 20. Jahrhundert passte. Auf diese Weise einen Quadratzentimeter zu zeichnen, dauerte Stunden – aber uns wurde diese Zeit gewährt. Denn das Material, das Auge und auch wir selbst benötigten sie: Es musste verinnerlicht werden.

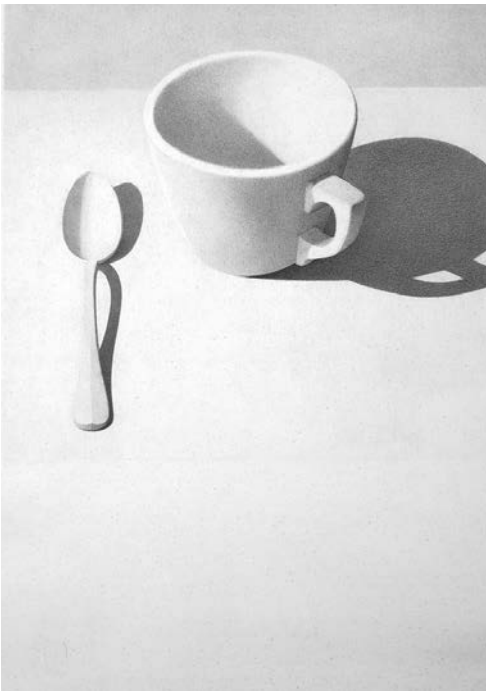


Fig. 37  
Rudi Meyer, student work from graphic design class, in the course Light and Shadow with Theo Eble, Allgemeine Gewerbeschule Basel, 1959–1963.

RM The pencil drawings in Theo Eble's course Light and Shadow were formative, with countless hours of drawing work. Each student chose an object and the drawing room was darkened except for a single 1000-watt light bulb, which created an almost sacred atmosphere. We sat in the same place in every lesson, and drew our object in incredible detail. Eble taught us how to sharpen pencils, how to apply different degrees of hardness, and how to "treat" the background with circular movements without killing the paper. From this he developed a kind of pedagogy. [Fig. 37]

One learnt a strict way of observation. For example, one suddenly saw how a drawn shadow darkens slightly at the edge when it hits the white paper, which means you have to lighten it a little. The differences were compared and evaluated. That was a basic training of the eye, and therefore enormously important for our later work as a graphic designer. Eble's course included something that did not really fit into the 20th century. It took three hours to draw a square centimeter in this way—but we were given the time, because the material, the eye, and we ourselves needed it. It had to be internalized.

### Lucia Herzog

Conversation with Sarah Klein, Basel, Nov. 20, 2012.

LH Ich glaube, in der Ausbildung in Basel konnte manches bewahrt werden, zu der Zeit, so um das Jahr 2000, als die Frage nach zeitgemässeren Unterrichtsmethoden in den Vordergrund drang.

LH I think many things were preserved in the training in Basel, at the time, around the year 2000, when the question of more contemporary teaching methods came to the fore.

### NORM

(Dimitri Bruni, Manuel Krebs, and Ludovic Varone)

Conversations with Jonas Berthod, Zurich, Jun. 15, 2017 and Jan. 30, 2018.

MK On faisait beaucoup d'illustrations et du dessin à l'école. [...] Bienne c'était une école de dessin, d'illustration, de peinture, d'impression ... assez artisanale, ce n'était pas orienté nouvelles technologies. [...] Et le fait qu'il y avait plus de dessin,

c'était qu'il n'y avait pas tellement le choix. Il n'y avait pas d'ordinateurs. [...] Je me souviens avoir vu une exposition en [1994] qui s'appelait *Das Fremde*. [Fig. 38] Et eux ils avaient tous fait des travaux sur l'ordinateur. Yves Netzhammer avait fait une affiche qui nous a beaucoup perturbés. C'était hyper bizarre. Nous on était un peu en arrière. On dessinait beaucoup, tout le monde dessinait. C'était aussi un peu la condition pour être accepté à l'école [de Bienne], c'était le dessin. [...]

*Strapazin* était assez important, pour nous. [...] Il y avait un prof particulier avec qui on faisait beaucoup de dessin et on s'est dit qu'il y avait d'autres gens aussi dans la ville de Bienne qui faisaient des trucs qui nous inspiraient.



Fig. 38  
Yves Netzhammer, *Das Fremde*  
(The other), 1994, offset,  
84 x 59.5 cm, ZHdK, Museum für  
Gestaltung Zürich.

MK We did a lot of illustration and drawing in school. Biel/Bienne was a school of drawing, illustration, painting, printing ... quite artisanal, it was not oriented towards new technologies. [...] And the reason there was more drawing was that

there was not much choice. There were no computers. [...] I remember seeing an exhibition in [1994] called *Das Fremde*. [Fig. 38] And they had all done work on the computer. Yves Netzhammer had made a poster that was very disturbing to us. It was really weird. We were a little behind. We drew a lot, everyone drew. It was also a bit of a condition for being accepted at the school [in Biel/Bienne], it was drawing. [...]

*Strapazin*\* was pretty important to us. [...] There was a tutor with whom we did a lot of drawing, and there were also other people in Biel/Bienne who did things that inspired us. [...]

## Hi (Megi Zumstein and Claudio Barandun)

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

JB You did an apprenticeship in sign painting in Alpnach from 1989 to 1993. I was wondering how you decided to become a sign painter.

MZ [...] When I was fourteen years old I went to a graphic design studio to have a sniff... I knew what it was, and I was interested. So I knew that I wanted to do something with graphics, but it was very hard to get a *Lehrstelle* [apprenticeship], and then I applied to the exam for the *Vorkurs* [foundation course] in Lucerne. It was in two steps, and I passed the first one then they said I could come back next year. But I was fifteen and needed a plan for what to do after finishing school. I went to work for a typographer at the *Luzerner Zeitung*, which was awful. Then I went to

\* *Strapazin* is a German and Swiss comic magazine that was launched in 1984. For a history of the magazine, see Cartoonmuseum Basel 2012.

see a photographer, but I didn't like it either. And then I had the opportunity to do sign painting. They only have two positions in Obwalden, so I took the opportunity and I was happy with it. I stayed there for four years to do my apprenticeship, and then I stayed for three more years.

I liked it [there], but [with] the introduction of the computer, everything changed. At first, it was all handmade and very interesting—all these old techniques—and when the computer was used more frequently, everybody came with WordArt, self-made designs; this was awful. We had a computer and a plotter, and in the end, it was only producing things that other people with no graphic education wanted to do.

JB So the computer removed any kind of creativity.

MZ Not any, but a lot. It became more of a technical job.

JB So the change in technology made you decide, well now it's time to go and do the foundation course.

MZ Well, I applied again to the *Vorkurs* exam ... and then I was accepted. Plan B, if it hadn't worked out, was to go to Paris or Holland and try to get experienced enough to use the old techniques of hand-sign painting. In Switzerland they always said it's much too expensive. So I thought, maybe I just need to get so much training that I'm quick enough for people to afford it.

JB And then after Lucerne you went to Zurich?

MZ Yes. I had my first year in Lucerne. I had



friends who applied to the exam in Zurich, and I thought I could try too. I didn't know anything about Zurich's education—it was the last day of inscription. I went there and got accepted [...].

JB So you didn't know anything about the Zurich school, famous teachers or otherwise.

MZ No. In the beginning not.

## NORM

(Dimitri Bruni, Manuel Krebs, and Ludovic Varone)

Conversations with Jonas Berthod, Zurich, Jun. 15, 2017  
and Jan. 30, 2018.

DB On a fait le *Vorkurs* à la Kantonale Schule für Gestaltung à Bienne, puis on a fait la Fachklasse für Grafik [classe professionnelle de graphisme, 1992–1996]. L'école de Bienne était connue à l'époque, ils avaient un excellent cours préparatoire. Moi je suis Biennois, donc je suis allé à Bienne, j'ai eu la chance de pouvoir y rentrer. Toi Manu, tu es de Berne ...

MK J'y suis allé parce que mes parents ne croyaient pas trop dans le métier. L'inscription pour le cours préparatoire était déjà passée dans toutes les autres écoles. J'ai fait le cours préparatoire à Bienne, et c'était assez évident de rester pour le graphisme, bien que ce n'était pas du tout clair ce que c'était le graphisme.

DB J'ai commencé l'école, je ne savais pas ce que c'était le graphisme.

MK Même quand on a fini l'école il y avait beaucoup de trucs qu'on ne savait pas. Comme

par exemple tout l'héritage suisse, les profs étaient presque gênés. Ils trouvaient ça ringard. [Les références étaient plutôt] Neville Brody et David Carson.

DB À part ça, les profs de graphisme qu'on avait à l'époque, ils nous ont en fait très très peu appris. On est sortis de l'école et on ne savait rien.

DB We attended the preliminary course at the Kantonale Schule für Gestaltung in Biel/Bienne [1991–1992], then the Fachklasse für Grafik [Graphic Design Class, 1992–1996]. The school in Biel/Bienne was known at the time; they had an excellent preparatory course. I am a Biel/Bienne native, so I went there. I was lucky enough to be able to get in. You, Manu, you're from Bern ...

MK I went there because my parents didn't believe in the profession too much. The registration deadline for the preparatory course had already passed at all the other schools. I did the preparatory course in Biel/Bienne, and it was pretty obvious I should stay for graphic design, although it was not at all clear what it was.

DB When I started school, I didn't know what graphic design was.

MK Even when we finished school, there was a lot of stuff we didn't know. Like the whole Swiss heritage; the teachers were almost embarrassed [about it]. They thought it was cheesy. [Their references were rather] Neville Brody and David Carson.

DB Besides, the graphic design teachers we had at the time

actually taught us very, very little. We got out of school and we didn't know anything.

## Gilles Gavillet

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

GG J'étais allé visiter la ZHdK à l'époque [...] J'avais aussi visité le Arts Center de Pasadena. Ils étaient installés en Suisse romande, vers la fin des années 1980 jusqu'au début des années 2000. Une antenne européenne avait été implémentée à l'école californienne pour former des designers pour le secteur automobile, mais il y avait une section graphique. C'était assez intéressant parce qu'ils étaient un peu plus connectés avec ce qui se passait aux États-Unis à ce moment-là, je pense à April Greiman ou Katherine McCoy. [...] Mais en termes d'influence et d'impact [pendant mes études entre 1993 et 1998] je citerais plutôt les premiers workshops qu'on a eus à l'ECAL grâce à l'idée des "visiting lecturers" de Pierre Keller. [...] On a eu des workshops avec Cornel [Windlin] et M/M [en 1997]. [...] Paul Scott Makela est aussi venu pour un workshop, il est arrivé avec un langage extrêmement nouveau, et que je redécouvre maintenant de manière intéressante. À ce moment-là, il était responsable du master design graphique de la Cranbrook Academy of Arts. Et quand il est venu à l'ECAL [pour le workshop], son esthétique ne ressemblait à rien que l'on ait déjà vu. Il faisait de la typographie en mouvement en 3D, comme pour le clip "Scream" de Michael Jackson, enfin c'est vraiment ... [...]. C'était assez séduisant. Ce n'était pas notre univers graphique, mais il nous fascinait par l'immédiateté de ses réalisations. [...] il nous a ensuite proposé qu'on aille à Cranbrook avec Stéphane Delgado et David Rust, qui était à l'époque assistant [à l'ECAL]. [...] C'est durant ce voyage que j'ai mieux connu

David, et que nous dessinons le caractère Multiple Master Detroit, que Makela utilisera dans ses dernières réalisations.

GG I had visited the ZHdK at that time [...] I had also visited the Arts Center in Pasadena. They were settled in French-speaking Switzerland, towards the end of the 1980s until the beginning of the 2000s. They had set up a European branch of the California school to train designers for the automotive sector, but there was also a graphic design section. It was quite interesting, because they were a little bit more connected with what was going on in the United States at that time. I am thinking of April Greiman or Katherine McCoy. [...] But in terms of influences and impact [during my studies between 1993 and 1998], I would rather cite the first workshops we had at the ECAL thanks to Pierre Keller's idea of "visiting lecturers." [...] We had workshops with Cornel [Windlin] and M/M [in 1997]. [...] Paul Scott Makela also came for a workshop; he came with an extremely new language, which I am now rediscovering in an interesting way. At that time, he was in charge of the Master's degree in Graphic Design at the Cranbrook Academy of Arts. And when he came to the ECAL [for the workshop], his aesthetics were unlike anything we'd ever seen before. He was doing 3D, moving typography, like for Michael Jackson's "Scream" clip, well it was really ... [...]. It was quite attractive. It wasn't our graphic universe, but he fascinated us by the immediacy of his work. [...] He then suggested that we go to Cranbrook with Stéphane Delgado and David Rust, who was an assistant [at ECAL] at the time. [...] It was during this trip that I got to know David better, and that we designed the Multiple Master Detroit typeface, which Makela used in his final work.

## Hi (Megi Zumstein and Claudio Barandun)

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

MZ When I was a student, a lot of young generation studios taught us: NORM, Elektrosmog ... Cornel Windlin was well known. So they were our idols, kind of. What they did was really cool.

## Manfred Maier

Conversation with Sarah Klein, Basel, Aug. 29, 2017.

MM Ich hatte einen Schüler [...] von dem ich alles, was er gemacht hatte, im Gang aufhängte. Auch die Arbeiten, die offensichtlich nicht fertig waren, sondern Möglichkeiten aufzeigten, wo es hätte hingehen können [...]. Da ging der Teufel los. Es wurde diskutiert darüber, ob ich das als Lehrer überhaupt ausstellen dürfe. Das seien ja gar keine Ergebnisse. Das hat viel an Auseinandersetzung angestossen.

MM I had a student [...] of whom I hung everything he did in the hallway. Even the works that were obviously not finished, but showed possibilities of where they might have gone [...]. That's when all hell broke loose. There was a discussion about whether I, as a teacher, should be allowed to exhibit this at all. They said that these weren't proper results. That caused a lot of controversy.

Johannes Itten, Berthold von Grünigen,  
Arnold Schwander, and Georg Gilg

Minutes of the meeting held at the Gewerbeschule in Zurich, Aug. 21, 1940 (Itten et al. 1940). Introductory note by Jonas Niedermann and Rudolf Barmettler.

The *Fachklassen* (e.g. Fachklasse für Grafik) at the vocational schools had been established as a parallel vocational training in the 1920s. According to the Swiss Vocational Training Act of 1930, however, they were not properly recognized. Johannes Itten, the director of the Gewerbeschule Zürich, engaged in negotiations shortly after his inauguration in 1939, as a result of which the special status of the *Fachklasse* was enshrined in law as a form of training; it was also officially certified, and the differences between the Fachklasse and practical, vocational training were settled. In essence, the debate revolved around the legal status of the diploma exams held at the Fachklassen in relation to the final apprenticeship exams held by the Canton.

All the important decision-makers were present at this decisive meeting in August 1940: Arnold Schwander represented the Bundesamt für Industrie, Gewerbe und Arbeit (BIGA) (Federal Office for Industry, Trade and Labor), Georg Gilg represented the Cantonal Amt für Industrie, Gewerbe und Arbeit Zürich (KIGA) (Office for Industry, Trade and Labor of Zurich), and Berthold von Grünigen represented the Verband Schweizerischer Grafiker (VSG) (Swiss Graphic Design Association) as well as the Schweizerischer Werkbund (SWB) (Swiss Werkbund) and the Gewerbeschule Zürich.

AS [...] Die Fachklassen dienen der Lehrlingsausbildung, gleichzeitig aber auch der Weiterbildung. Es wäre von grossem Wert – und entspricht auch dem Wunsche des Kantons – wenn man über die eigentliche Lehrlingsausbildung Klarheit schaffen könnte. [...] [Bei den Graphikern] hat sich gezeigt, dass die Lösung des Problems nicht ohne weiteres zu finden ist, welches heisst: Ausbildung des Lehrlings in privaten

Ateliers und Ausbildung in der Fachschule. [...] In erster Linie stehen die Lehrabschlussprüfungen zur Diskussion [...].

JI [...] Vom Bund und Kanton wird unser Diplom nicht anerkannt, die Praxis aber zeigt, dass die jungen Leute die bei uns den Abschluss gemacht haben, in ihrem Beruf sehr rasch vorwärts kommen. [...] Der Schweizerische Graphiker-Verband ist die gegebene Verbands-Organisation, die für unsere Ausbildung in Frage kommt. Auch hier hat sich gezeigt, dass die Ausbildung unserer Klasse so umfassend ist, dass sie mit dem Beruf "Lithographen-Zeichner" gar nicht mehr verglichen werden kann. [...] Es ist darum wichtig, dass man auch hier das Diplom anerkennt, damit die Leute auch einen richtigen Abschluss ihrer Berufsausbildung haben.

GG [...] Ob die Ausbildung an der Schule in dem gleichen Masse das vermitteln kann – wie die Ausbildung am Lehrort – das ist noch eine offene Frage. Beim graphischen Zeichner fragt es sich: Ist es ein freier Künstlerberuf oder noch als "Gewerbe" einzureihen. [...] Meine Idee ist, dass man für die Fachklasse auch da ein Reglement schaffen soll, wo bereits Lehrlings-Reglemente bestehen; aber man sollte kein Extra-Diplom schaffen, sondern der Schweizerische Fähigkeitsausweis sollte genügen. [...]

JI [...] Wir werden nicht besonders erfreut sein, wenn man die Kunstgewerbeschule zur Berufsschule macht. [...] Gefühlsmässig wehrt man sich dagegen, dass man unsere Leute, die eine viel weitergehende Ausbildung haben als es in der Praxis möglich ist, mit den anderen gleich stellt. [...] Das Niveau der Schule könnten wir so immer weiter hinaufschrauben. Haben wir keine

eigene Prüfung, so sinken wir zu einer Berufsschule hinab, die neben der Praxis ausbildet.

BvG [...] So wie die Gewerbeschule Ergänzung zur Berufslehre ist, so sind die Tagesklassen Ergänzung zum Gewerbe. Kein Gewerbe ist aber so sehr dem Wechsel unterworfen wie das Kunstgewerbe. Vor zwanzig Jahren war es mehr dekorativ, heute greift es schon überall in die formale Gestaltung der Industrie ein. Das Neue aber wird oft von den Verbänden bekämpft [...]. Von der Schule ist dann der Impuls ausgegangen, der die neuen technischen Voraussetzungen ergriffen und mit neuen künstlerischen Mitteln verarbeitet hat. Das ist der triftigste Grund, warum wir eine gewisse Selbständigkeit haben müssen.

AS [...] The Fachklassen provide both an apprenticeship training and further education at the same time. It would be of great value—and also in line with the wishes of the canton—if it were possible to clarify the current situation for training apprentices. [...] [The graphic artists] have shown that the solution to the problem is not easy to find, which means training apprentices in private studios and in technical schools. [...] First and foremost, the final apprenticeship examinations are up for discussion [...].

J1 [...] Our diploma is not recognized by the Confederation or the canton, but practice shows that the young people who have graduated with us make very rapid progress in their profession. [...] The Association of Swiss Graphic Designers is the only association that can be considered for our training. Here, too, it has been shown that the training of our class is so comprehensive that it can no longer be compared with that of a “lithograph draughtsman.” [...] It is therefore important that our diploma is recognized here as



well, so that people have a proper qualification for their vocational training.

GG [...] It remains an open question as to whether the training offered at a college can be equivalent to the workplace training in an apprenticeship. With a graphic draughtsman, the question is: Is his profession to be classified as that of a freelance artist, or as a “trade”? [...] My idea is that we should also create regulations for the Fachklasse where regulations for apprenticeships already exist, but that we should not create an extra diploma; the Swiss certificate of proficiency should suffice. [...]

JI [...] We won't be particularly pleased if you make the Kunstgewerbeschule a vocational school. We feel we have to defend ourselves against putting our people on an equal footing with the others, since ours have a much more extensive education than is possible in a practical apprenticeship. [...] We could continue to raise the level of the school in this way. If we don't have our own examination, we will descend to being a vocational school that trains people in tandem with practical work.

BvG [...] Just as the Gewerbeschule complements the apprenticeship, the day classes complement business. But no business is as subject to change as the applied arts. Twenty years ago, applied arts were more decorative, today they already intervene everywhere in the formal design of industry. But the new is often fought against by the associations [...]. It was the school that gave the impetus for taking up the new technical parameters, assimilating them using new, artistic means. That is the most valid reason for us to have a certain degree of independence.

## Willy Rotzler

Opening speech of the exhibition *Grafiker – ein Berufsbild*, held in Zurich, Mar. 15, 1955 (Rotzler 1955).  
Introductory note by Sara Zeller.

Organized by the Verband Schweizerischer Grafiker (VSG), the exhibition *Grafiker – ein Berufsbild* (Graphic designer—a job profile) provided an interesting insight into how this professional association defined the job. The exhibition showed works by VSG members and provided information about the graphic designer's apprenticeship, areas of work, and career possibilities in a national context. The venue, the Kunstgewerbemuseum Zürich (Zurich Museum of Arts and Crafts), was located in the same building as the Kunstgewerbeschule.

WR Immer wieder werden wir von Ausländern über das Geheimnis der guten Qualität unserer Graphik ausgefragt. Wir haben uns die Frage selber oft schon überlegt. Es gibt gewiss dafür keine eindeutige Antwort. Eines aber dürfen wir vielleicht immer wieder feststellen: Die Ausbildung des Graphikers ist in der Schweiz eine besonders sorgfältige.

WR Time and again we are asked by foreigners about the secret of the good quality of our graphic design. We have often thought about the question ourselves. There is certainly no clear answer. But there is one thing we have repeatedly observed: The training for graphic designers is particularly thorough in Switzerland.

## Armin Vogt

Conversation with Sandra Bischler, Basel, Sep. 13, 2017.

Many Swiss graphic designers who graduated during the 1950s and 1960s were able to profit from the growing international

reputation of Swiss graphic design, and were thus often warmly welcomed in other countries, e.g. France, Italy, England, and the USA. Armin Vogt went to work in Paris and Milan in the early 1960s, right after having finished his apprenticeship. Just like him, almost all Swiss graphic designers went through at least a four-year, practice-based educational system, either as a student of a full-time graphic design class, as an apprentice in a studio, or even both. This educational system, which was founded on providing a basic formal training and promoting visual invention and execution, apparently presented a stark contrast to what was offered in other countries, and proved an advantage for young Swiss designers when they were abroad.

AV In den 1950er und 1960er Jahren waren Schweizer Grafiker im Ausland, zum Beispiel in Frankreich, enorm gefragt. Ich vermute, weil wir in der Schweiz einfach eine solide Ausbildung durchlaufen hatten. Die Grafik-Ausbildung war wie ein Fundament, auf dem man aufbauen konnte. Wir haben Zeichnen gelernt und geübt, mit Schrift umzugehen, Schrift von Hand zu zeichnen, Verhältnisse zu sehen und so weiter, eine grundlegende Schulung. Anstatt zu lernen, wie man etwas kopiert oder wie man sich an Vorbildern anderer Grafiker orientiert oder “anlehnt”, anstatt zu fragen: “Was macht man in Amerika?”, fing unsere Ausbildung bei “null” an. Wir lernten, Visuelles zu erfinden und Neuland zu erforschen.

AV At the beginning of the 1960s, Swiss graphic designers were in great demand abroad, for example in France. I suppose this is because we had simply enjoyed a solid education in Switzerland. The graphic design education was like a foundation on which to build. We learned to draw, to use type, to draw lettering by hand, to see relationships, and so on: a basic training. Instead of learning how to copy something, or how to follow the examples of other graphic designers, instead of asking “What do they do in America?,” we learned to invent the visual and to explore new territories.

Lora Lamm

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

LL La formazione svizzera [in Italia] non aveva rivali.

LL The Swiss training had no rivals [in Italy].