

MADE TO WORK, MADE TO LOVE

BY ARIANA PRADAL

Swiss design is classified as precise, functional or technically ingenious. Not many people would consider Swiss objects poetic, tempting or even ravishing. Most of the time – and especially in the past – Swiss design was made for its purpose: made to work. Unlike Switzerland's neighbours, this country has never been a kingdom with a royal court; with kings, queens or noblemen that used their clothes and objects to distinguish themselves from the normal crowd. The Swiss were farmers in a mountain country. That's why masterly and costly crafted items have no tradition here.

The beginning of the 20th century saw the increased influence of Modernism on art, design and architecture. This movement hoped to become liberated from the social and political traditions of the past and to break into a new future. It said that modern design should be guided by function, since one of the aims was to free objects from their ornamental symbolism. That's way modernist design was often aesthetically simple. So the aesthetic of Modernism visually matched well with the Swiss look of everyday objects – although the background of this look-alike was different. The German-speaking artists and designers of the country were especially interested in the ideas of Modernism, finding its centre in the German institution of the Bauhaus. (The French-speaking part was more oriented towards France.) Swiss citizens studied and worked there and brought the ideas of the Bauhaus back to Switzerland for example to the Kunstgewerbeschule in Zurich (today: University of the Arts). Another important impulse to establish design in Zurich was the founding of the furniture shop Wohnbedarf in 1931, which still exists at the same place at Talstrasse 11. In close cooperation with internationally renowned architects and artists from that time, such as Alvar Aalto or Le Corbusier, Wohnbedarf developed furniture, which today are deemed classic pieces.

Today designers work with the understanding of their ancestors. Tradition still has a considerable status among contemporary designers. They add new materials and technologies and adapt chairs, lamps and accessories to today's requirements. Most Swiss designers and agencies work in the Greater Zurich area. Apart from being a financial town Zurich is also a place for creative work. A study done by the Canton and City of Zurich's Economic Development Department in 2005 states that, at the time, 36,700 people were employed in the creative economy. If you compare this number to the 47,000 employees of the banks – the key industry of Zurich – then the importance of the creative economy for the city becomes clear.

If we look at Zurich's design scene we can roughly divide it into three groups: agencies that work as service providers and develop everything for their clients from the graphics to the product and website. Well known in this field is Nose Design Intelligence – with about 50 employees, a big player for Swiss design standards. The second group are the design authors, well-known names who usually are active in furniture design. This

group includes Alfredo Häberli, Frédéric Dedelley or Hannes Wettstein, who just passed away recently. The third consists of designer labels: designers who design, produce and sell their furniture or accessories all in one. The most recognized in this group is the bag label Freitag founded 15 years ago by the two brothers Daniel and Markus Freitag.

Let's have a look at some established and young designers from the second and third group.

The authors

One of the most notable and esteemed Swiss designer's is Hannes Wettstein. He has designed bicycles, watches, furniture, exhibitions and even hotel interiors. He was one of the first Swiss to start working with the well-known Italian furniture companies like Molteni or Cassina. His oeuvre is full of new developments, as he loved to try out new technologies or to transfer them from other fields into his. One good example, demonstrating his way of working is the chair Alfa for the Italian furniture manufacturer Molteni. It consists of polyester composite reinforced with fibreglass and is coated with three layers of paint. The manufacturer and the designer borrowed both the material and the process from the car industry. The Alfa is made from two parts: the backrest and the rear legs are made of one piece, and the seat and front legs of another. This is an unusual construction seeing as chairs are conventionally made with four legs, a seat, a backrest and many joining elements.

Another successful designer is Alfredo Häberli (p. 36). He has worked with companies all over Europe. When we look at his objects we see his love for form, beauty and humour. Häberli, having lived the first years of his life in Argentina, brings southern joie de vivre to the rational Swiss style. His objects not only function well but they have tempting little extras in form, surface or function. An example is his barstool Ginger created out of a fine stainless steel structure and an upholstered seat. Besides being a beautiful piece, underneath the seat there is space for your bag or hat. So the problem of where to place your bag when you go out for dinner is cleverly solved with this stool.

Now a new generation is slowly entering the scene. However, as development and production can take quite a while, they haven't many objects on the market yet. One of these promising designers is Andreas Saxer (p. 40). He founded his own studio just a few years ago. "Walk away with me" is one of his first objects. It's a playful interpretation of the classic wooden stool. Its form and construction are traditional, while the legs angled in reverse cause the stool to appear to be strolling along. The red "socks" on the feet of the legs heighten the feeling of dynamic movement.



STRADA DEL SOLE SUNGLASSES



HANNES WETTSTEIN - ALFA CHAIR



ANDREAS SAXER - "WALK AWAY WITH ME"



ALFREDO HÄBERLI - BARSTOOL GINGER

The Design Labels

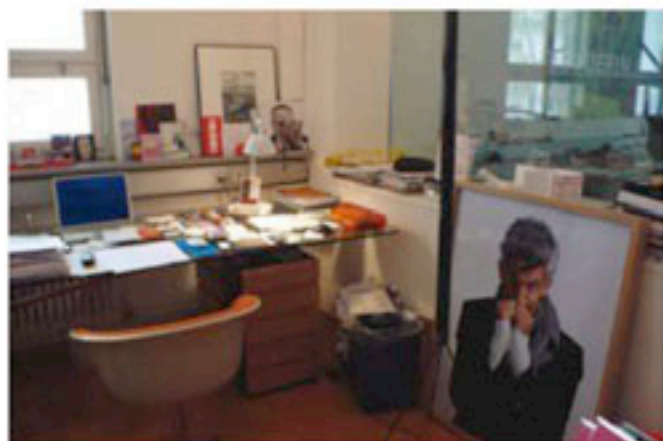
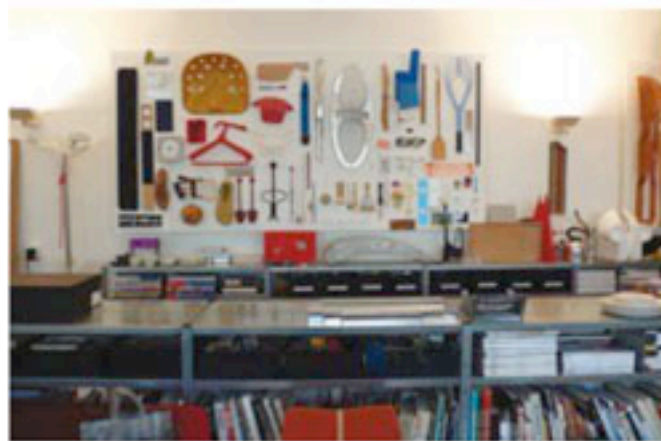
Well-known within the fashionable and trendy globetrotter scene, are the Freitag-Bags. The creation the two brothers Daniel and Markus Freitag (p. 38) made out of used truck tarpaulins, bicycle inner tubes and seatbelts is not only a useful aid, but also an icon. The brothers have invented an individual mass product. Each bag is unique, thus carrying the message: I belong, and yet I am different. The Freitags design and produce the bags themselves in Zurich and distribute them all over the world. They also run their own shops in the Swiss holiday resort Davos, and in a container tower in Zurich.

Designing the flattest sunglasses was the aim of the two founders of the label "Strada del Sole". The designer Sandra Kaufmann and the optician Markus Dudli have developed sunglasses made of spring steel that are so flat and flexible that you can carry them in your trouser-pocket without breaking them. The label of only two years old defines perfectly what Swiss design stands for today: to solve problems in a clever way, but also to combine the object with a light-hearted and joyful attitude to life. Today's objects are still made to work but also made to love. So the rather rational approach to design over the years has become more manifold with poetic, humorous and even tempting sides.

DESIGN

WWW.NOSE.CH
WWW.ALFREDO-HAEBERLI.COM
WWW.FDEDELLEY.CH
WWW.HANNESWETTSTEIN.COM
WWW.FREITAG.CH
WWW.ANDREAS-SAXER.COM
WWW.STRADADELSOLE.CH

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STUDIO ALFREDO HÄBERLI, PHOTOS - FUYUMI NAMIOKA

INTERVIEW WITH ALFREDO HÄBERLI

DESIGNER

You opened your first solo exhibition entitled "SurroundThings" at the Museum für Gestaltung Zurich in June 08, why did you choose this title?

Twenty years ago I designed the first exhibition here as an architect. I paid my study by designing exhibition spaces. I figured out during my study that what interests me is everything that surrounds me: the size of a room or the size of a house, but not bigger. I can implement my experience very well in this dimension. So I played with "things" and "surroundings" and put the two words together.

With a very original approach, you chose to present objects that were not yours?

I wanted to look back and dedicate a part of the exhibition to Swiss design history. I chose 200 objects from the design collection here at the museum. It was simply a way to say that I'm not the only one, there is the design history and other designers, engineers that I appreciate very much and who had an influence on me.

In your opinion is there a difference between simplicity and minimalism?

I think the word "minimalism" has been overused in the last five or even ten years. There is a little bit of confusion. Minimalism for me is more art orientated than simplicity. I think even if you have something very complicated, it can still be simple. So I try to reach this simplicity as much as I can. That's what I do with simplicity; it's the search to do more with less.

How important is intuition in your work?

It's very important. In our profession sometimes we tend to use our brain too much. It's very Germanic to describe why you design in a certain way. When you go to Italy they just talk about beauty. The function, what we are used to explaining here in Switzerland is gone. It's either beautiful or not. Children are the same: they look at objects and react in 2 seconds. So I try to get as deep as I can to give an object a soul, something you can't describe verbally, you just feel it. It's beautiful, I like it but I don't want to describe why I like it.

Besides Switzerland, you work with Italian and Scandinavian producers, are there any differences in their approach to design?

Italians fall in love with an idea and just do it, they have a lot of passion and get great power out of that. In Scandinavia you check the technique, solve the problems, you go deeply into every step of the design process, all the way through until selling the product. Scandinavian countries are very design-orientated and designers are put at the same level as musicians or writers. In Switzerland in the period of industrial design, the designers

were giving service to the industry, they were making objects more beautiful, more practical but they were not considered artists or part of the culture. Nowadays it's a bit different.

You are also working as a shoe designer?

Working for Camper is wonderful. I have to go to the island Majorca to work. The people are very relaxed, with a great sense of humour and a kind of cleverness you find only in the peasants. "Peasant" means "Camper" in Majorcan Spanish.

How do you integrate eco-consciousness into your work?

First I try to design products that last for years or decades. Then I try to give a direct response, not to mix or combine materials. I use new technology but I try to use it in an intelligent way. We always need technique and companies willing to invest to be innovative. We designers are not strong enough on our own. If your name is Philippe Starck and you are known worldwide, you are strong enough even to force them. But we need the industry. Ecology has always been a concern in my studio but I didn't want to point it out with a finger, I wanted to do it in elegant way and that's what I tried to achieve through my Water Tank in the concept kitchen I did for Schiffrini. Nowadays we turn on the tap without even thinking where the water is coming from. That's why the tank is there, the pipe is quite big but the water that comes from it is very thin and reduced so people would understand that. When they see the tank, they immediately think of water, it's true. That's what I wanted to say, in a metaphoric way.

Your studio is based in Zurich, do you like the city?

I am particularly fond of the neighbourhood Kreis 4 and 5; this is the most lively area. You have a lot of restaurants, very creative young people trying to bring fresh ideas into the city. You have new art galleries that are interesting. They try to show young artists. Yes, I think Zurich is really fantastic with a very high quality of life!



ALFREDO HÄBERLI - THE WATER TANK (CISTERN) OF THE CONCEPT-KITCHEN FOR SCHIFFINI, ITALY, COURTESY OF THE DESIGNER

INTERVIEW WITH DANIEL AND MARKUS FREITAG

FOUNDERS AND DESIGNERS OF FREITAG

How did the Freitag project start?

Daniel - We are both graphic designers or display artists. At that time you didn't store work on a CD so there were big papers around and to carry them from A to B in Zurich you needed to have a bag. In 1993 bike messenger bags weren't available in Zurich. The first bike messenger company founded in Zurich has the same founding date as Freitag. It was the need for such a bag that was the start of our project.

Markus - The whole production took place in my student flat. I went outside of Zurich to a trucking company to buy some truck tarpaulin. I got the first piece of truck tarp, which was quite enough for the first and second prototype. At that time Daniel was in San Francisco for 3 months so I sent the prototype to him, because in San Francisco bike messengers already existed, for a real test of the first Freitag messenger bag. He came back with feedback and we started the production. I was sharing my student flat with two other roommates and in the end with two industrial sewing machines and a big load of truck tarp on the balcony. It was a mix between living and working.

How did you come up with the idea of using truck tarp?

Daniel - The location of this flat and the view from the kitchen window was the inspiration. There is a freeway passing right through Zurich. All the trucks that go from north to south, from Hamburg to Palermo, pass right through Zurich because there is no street around the town. This kitchen window looked onto the freeway and Markus saw all the trucks passing by and this was the inspiration for the bag. The material is waterproof and strong enough to protect all the goods on a truck so it must be good enough to build a resistant Freitag bag.

Markus - We thought each bag is individual depending on the truck tarp we use and depending on the truck tarp we cut into pieces. It took several years before these individual products became famous like they are today. I think every big company tries to create individual products and in the case of Freitag it was just a basic concept. It still surprises us that our own products took off from those days in 1993.

How do you run the production?

Daniel - We have done the same for 15 years, production is exactly the same. We collect old truck tarps and cut them into pieces. We look for the right graphic elements to create the essence of the Freitag bag and it's cut by hand in Zurich. It's the same old idea but still fits in with the latest technology. Freitag is low tech yet it fits in with the high-tech of today.

Is the Freitag concept connected to an idea of nomadism?

Daniel - I think this mobile lifestyle is part of being the creative people we are. You are on the move all the time, sometimes you stay for a certain time in Tokyo and get all the inspiration you need there. This kind of nomad lifestyle is inspiring to us but our inspiration is also the story of trucks so when we were choosing our location of our first flagship store outside Switzerland we chose Hamburg. We like the city because there is a big harbour, there are all the containers, all the trucks arriving. The truck and container topic is very fascinating to us.

Is "Made in Switzerland" a strong element for Freitag?

Daniel - We like products that last and I think they should last quality-wise, material-wise, it shouldn't fall apart after wearing it three times, but also design-wise. Rather than designing fashion, which you have to change every season, we like to make designs that last for longer, simple, classic and functional. I think this might be something that people call Swiss quality, to have these two aspects which come together.

Markus - Switzerland is not part of the European Union and Swiss people need to look outside Zurich and Switzerland to get inspiration and connections. On the other hand I think people like to stay here, everything is very close together the quality of life is very high. This mix of being open minded but at the same time liking this small environment where everything is available was a good base for us to start. At first we sold our bags to our friends who are designers as well. We never needed to invest in a marketing campaign or buy advertising space. We distributed the products in this community of graphic designers and then it started to work by itself. I don't know if this is a strategy you could use again and again but it worked out for us. If you're only operating within this small area of Zurich though people might be suspicious and say it's not cool anymore. It's important to step outside of Switzerland so that the critical designer crowd accepts you in the long term.

Now with a bit of perspective, what has been the main inspiration behind Freitag?

Markus - It reminded us of a family holiday to India 20 years ago. It was the last big family trip together with our parents and we saw people making very nice products with limited material and I think that became part of our inspiration as well. Another inspiration was when our parents threw out the green waste into the compost bin and you saw something starting to grow out of it. Another one was maybe that we started working together early when we were children. Sunday mornings when our parents were sleeping we wanted something that wasn't available and so we just decided ok lets try to build it ourselves so that's also part of the story. Somehow we also felt in love with these truck tarpaulins which wasn't really love because we hated those

trucks passing by the kitchen window. So there was the idea: lets cut them into pieces and bring them away from the engines onto the backs of the bike messengers. I think it's this kind of ambivalent feeling that is a motor for our work. Also this topic which is called brownfield: places which have done industrial time already, but with potential for revival, which could also be something nice if you try to see it. I think that's the true Freitag spirit.

Daniel - The material itself is plastic we don't actually like plastic but we use this material in our products because it's recycled. I think you have these conflicts all the time and just to deal with them is a good motivation. Maybe it would have been much easier to build new containers with new steel, for our flagship store in Zurich, but then the architecture wouldn't tell you that story and I think this is what's fascinating to us, the fact that the architecture or the product tells your story, we really reached this with those concepts.

What is the importance of recycling for Freitag?

Markus - We started to be eco-conscious way before Al Gore taught us that we needed to change something so it has been our philosophy since 1993. I think it's a personal motivation to try and become good or better in creating your product or in running your company. It's good here because the truck tarps come in and the goods leave at the back and then you have all the steps in between. As soon as you have everything under one roof you always see the potential that is around you. If you outsource everything its just far away, its maybe a problem they have somewhere in Asia. Instead we have our problems here and we try to solve these problems everyday.

Daniel - I think that's also why we don't talk about sustainability because it's a very over-used word nowadays and its meaning starts to get diluted. We talk about a holistic perspective, we take one step back. It's about production, design and distribution channels. We can skip some marketing efforts and instead try to invest in better products. Then this holistic perspective comes into play. To be able to work with all the elements not just designing a product then handing it over to a marketing company and then to a sales company. We want to follow the products through their whole lifecycle. This is the perspective we try to bring into our company.

Who are the "Freitag people"?

Daniel - It's interesting, the classic way to describe a target group somehow doesn't work for Freitag. Age-wise we have a wide range of clients which seem impossible to bring together under one brand roof. Sometimes we also see that Freitag is used to describe a certain target group. For example there was a bar opening and they couldn't find a name to describe the crowd going there so they just called them the "Freitag people". I think it's a mentality they have in common rather than the

same profession, income or age. So it's probably our concept that brings them together. We are open to people from 6 to 60 years old. We don't care about age but maybe about the way of thinking. We do what we think is right and our customers happen to like these ideas.

WWW.FREITAG.CH

INTERVIEW WITH ANDREAS SAXER

DESIGNER

You are part of the younger generation of designers after people like Alfredo Häberli, Hannes Wettstein or Frederic Dedelley. What is the situation in Switzerland nowadays?

We are a bunch of young people forcing our work and trying to catch up with our predecessors. Sometimes we have the opportunity to discuss and learn from the older generation and if you are lucky they help you out with advice and contacts. But most of the time people are on their own and gather to share the expenses for exhibitions. Sadly we do not have Institutions that support the younger generation like the VIA in France or the German Design Council. But because of that we have developed a strong willpower to survive in the design circus.

You are based in Zurich where you have a high concentration of creative people. What does this city bring to a young designer like you?

Because of the high concentration of creative people, Zurich offers very attractive events and openings, which are very inspiring and keep you motivated in your work. I like the Museum für Gestaltung that offers exhibitions in different disciplines of design. There are great alternative spaces and temporary galleries and sometimes design and art are very close to each other. The opening in the last few years of design galleries accomplishes the landscape of design in Zurich.

Your work doesn't seem restricted solely to Industrial design; you are also involved in set and exhibition design and graphic design. Is it something related to Switzerland, to your generation or something more personal?

On one hand I have my own design activities, and I regularly participate in exhibitions in Switzerland and abroad. By presenting my products to various publics, I was able to build valuable contacts, clients and producers alike. On the other hand I had to find a way to pay my monthly expenses right away so I started to work with event companies and cultural institutions. This cross financing of my own projects is representative for a young generation in Zurich.

WWW.ANDREAS-SAXER.COM



ANDREAS SAXER - "COSY", COURTESY OF THE DESIGNER

INTERVIEW WITH ALBERT KRIEMLER

AKRIS DESIGNER

Akris is known for giving great attention to craftsmanship and detail. Would you agree that there is some kind of "Swissness" in this, and do you, as a Swiss designer, think of yourself in these terms?

I think that today, anyone who deals at our level of ready-to-wear has to do quality work, so it would be difficult to say that this is particularly Swiss. To be sure, our country is known for its craftsmanship and quality, but on the other hand I think it's very important to realize that nowadays, quality alone is not enough. The fact that we are Swiss was decided by our grandma who founded our company here in St. Gallen. I'm very proud to be Swiss and I think it's great that we market our collections out of St. Gallen to the whole world; but it really is something like a family accident! And now we are in a time in which people don't ask any more where you come from, but rather, what do you do. That's the advantage of today. I wonder if we would have been able to develop ourselves in the same way 25 years earlier.

When designing a new collection, where do you start?

There are many ways in which designers work: some start with a sketch or with an image, while others try a toile and get it into a shape they like, and then use a fabric. For me, everything starts with fabric and colour. It's very important before you start developing fabrics to know what the silhouette is for the season. Is it structured, is it lightweight, heavy weight, or is it in big volumes, small volumes. For sure you need to decide this because the season has a theme, but then independently of that, you must start developing the fabric. When I start drawing, I need the cloth in my hand because it tells me what I can do with it.

St. Gallen has a great tradition of embroidery...is this an important element for Akris today?

I work intensively with St. Gallen embroidery. St. Gallen is still the city of world-renowned embroidery, and it's a great advantage that I can work with these archives. St. Gallen embroidery is a trademark of our own collections.

Fashion is per excellence related to time, whereas your creations seem timeless. Does this present a challenge?

I prefer simple lines, and for me, proportions are very important. I always think of the complete silhouette, but also how I could design a single jacket or a pair of pants, or how a t-shirt would work with an existing wardrobe. That's maybe one aspect that makes my pieces timeless because they stand on their own; they don't need the whole look or the complete proportion of the season. And my clothes are also made of valuable materials. I use cashmere, leather, silks and natural fabrics. I think that a woman should have the same rights as men: when men have a jacket they like, they wear it for 2-3 seasons. Women should have the same right. On the other hand,

it's extremely important that fashion be a permanent evolution. It's a bit of a paradox: during a fashion season, I want Akris to be Akris, but I also want Akris to be something always new. The people who wear my clothes should always recognize that it's Akris. Maybe I don't keep to the fashion rules of the moment but I don't mind; it's more important for me that we keep our signature, and at the same time, always evolve forward in a very creative and new way.

Your style is quite minimalist... is that a quality you value?

Today, a lot of people work, especially in architecture, with a minimalist approach. The question, however, is that of size, because I think minimalism has to be done right. It needs the kind of talent that we see in the architecture of Adolf Loos, Mies van der Rohe or Le Corbusier, the founders of grand minimalism. If a simple thing does not have just the right proportion, it can be very wrong. And I don't believe that all that is being built and created at present, with this 'Swiss minimalist' approach, will have a future.

How does architecture fit into your life?

I love architecture as a hobby...it's an area where I spend a lot of time when I'm not thinking about fashion. That might be why there is an important architectural influence on my work.

You dedicated an entire collection to the architects Herzog & de Meuron. What was it that inspired you?

Surface has been a big theme for Herzog & de Meuron for years. When you work on a surface, things get heavy quickly, chunky and voluminous. Nobody wants that today; so we need to create surface in another way. Herzog & de Meuron's façades are very important in their creative work besides the fact that they are fabulous architects. They've worked on facades in an important way over the last ten years. There are a lot of highly interesting constructions and super positions, but also a lot of great visual impressions that were inspiring in the fabric development of that season. It has been a major collection for us. (p. 24)

The first Akris exhibition took place at the St. Gallen Embroidery Museum. Can you tell us how that came about?

I've learned that you always have to be open to new experiences when it comes to creative work, and I discovered that when we curated our first exhibition here in St. Gallen for the St. Gallen Embroidery Museum two years ago. I was asked for years if we could do the first Akris exhibition there. I always hesitated - I just felt I wasn't ready for such a presentation. But at some point I began to accept the idea. It was a new and creative challenge for my team. An exhibition of clothes is always difficult. That is what I understood looking at fashion exhibitions over all the

years, and I thought that it would be a great exercise for us, and it was.

How did your experience in the ballet world have an impact on your work?

Four years ago, the choreographer John Neumeier asked me to do the costumes for the Hamburg New Year's concert ballet. For some reason he wanted to ask me, and after some hesitation I went ahead with it, and it went well. That was my first experience with ballet. My second cooperation with Neumeier was this year, with the 'Josephs Legende'. When he asked me if I would do it, I wasn't sure. First, I had to get into the whole thing and study it. It had already been done in a very opulent, baroque way by Ernst Fuchs and John Neumeier in 1978 - and I just thought that it wasn't my 'cup of tea'. I said this to John (Neumeier), and he replied, "that's exactly why I want you." So that's how this second engagement started. And it was a wonderful experience - and probably my first experience in designing costumes for men. Aside from the women's costumes, we also did 45 men's costumes. (p. 26)

The greatest compliment was that people would come and say, "it's so Akris," which was nice to hear. I didn't want to do ballet dress in the ballet manner. I did all the costumes without any bias-cut which is quite unusual: ballet skirts often are bias-cut because they move easily. It was very interesting for me to get the whole functionality working. They were my fabrics, and my colors, but we made them in a costume department in Hamburg. And that was also a great experience, to work with another team. I realized what it meant to work with a team who doesn't quite know what you think, and we had to start from scratch in order to bring in our own 'handwriting'.

Where do you get inspiration?

Inspiration is constant, wherever you move: you go out, you see, you realize, its everywhere. You discover new ideas; especially when you are building a collection you see something which has nothing to do with the trend but you just see something and you get inspired. That's why you always have your little sketchbook with you. On the other hand it's life itself that interests me, what people need when they travel or when they work.

What is your relationship with Zurich?

Zurich, as a small city, is one of the most cosmopolitan, German-speaking cities in Europe. It's a fabulous city. It has an excellent culture and a high standard of life. And Akris has a strong relation to Zurich: we have about 85 people working in our atelier in Zurich; a lot of my collections are there. All important evening dresses, double face jackets and coats, the leathers and cashmeres as well as nearly all dresses, are developed in Zurich. I love to go there.

Please note that this text is based on a video interview.

FASHION

INTERVIEW WITH UGO RONDINONE

ARTIST

The work of Ugo Rondinone is a wide spectrum of expressive possibilities though adhering constantly to the same existential themes, investigating every particular nuance. Varietas inscribed in a vocabulary that continually reforms and rewrites his intimate poetic world. The artist has availed himself of painting, video, photography, sculpture and sound but has always given an environmental and installation quality and a delicately melancholic tone to each of his works. The count of days, waiting, slowness... in the end the boredom, these are the "moods" that Rondinone capably conveys to us together with a sense of serene reconciliation in front of the maximum extent of life. Rondinone was born in 1964 in Brunner in Switzerland. He lives and works between New York and Zurich. **by Milovan Farronato**

In your last exhibition "Turn back time. Let's start this day again" you realized your first still life work (in fact the first samples of this series of work were present in the Eva Presenhuber gallery in the last Exhibition in Zurich 2008: a group of oranges left on the floor and a piece of cardboard leaning on the wall at the entrance of the gallery). So the natural reality of the lemons (and in this case a couple of tree trunks) vs the synthetic inanimate material: now reduced to a sculpture of four pieces of polystyrene. And the fact that these fragments of life and quotidian reality are reproduced in painted bronze and lead. We're not dealing with terracotta, a material in some way still alive. The material with which you have created these pieces seems frozen in a definitive position. Forcing them into an eternal repose. Almost as if they were monuments of a present, passed unnoticed. In this diatribe between monuments and non-monumental (and therefore quotidian) where do you place your work?

At one point in Beckett's waiting for godot, all four main characters, Vladimir and Estragon, Pozzy and Lucky, collapse into a struggling heap on the ground. For some minutes, the action threatens to stall altogether, with none of the characters able to get back on their feet. My work too often approaches this zero condition, through the enactment of collapse and isolation. In my "still.life." sculptures the work is held or called by the ground. The ground is temporal. It is temporal first of all in the sense that it is closely associated with the here and now. The ground is a place of last resort, a place of trust, a generalized securing or orientation of the sense of place. A human body moves between many different experiences of different floors and plots of ground, but is nevertheless orientated always just to one ground. One of the reasons to fill the cast bronzes with lead was to reinforce this notion of heaviness pulling towards the ground. It is time thickened and slowed into space, a stay against the passage of time. The dimension of heaviness or down-ness or under-ness in the "still.life." sculptures can never be fully in mind, or in view, but is always at work. The work of the "still.life." sculptures creates its own gravity system. Becoming its own world, it comes down to itself. What interests me most in the "still.life." sculptures, is its inherent poetry of slowness. These weighed down sculptures seek not for outward action, but for inward stasis. The weight helps to avoid transposition into intelligibility by virtue of his mass of potential meanings, and so comes to "just exist". Therefore the work serves as a vehicle of meditation of my life and life in general.

The wooden sculptures in the exhibition form a right angle, while the sheets of polystyrene piled one on top of another define perpendicular surfaces... the door is a grid of horizontal and vertical planks. There is at least a formal interest in geometry in the order of these works?

The ground is temporal in another, more complex sense. The passing of time always dematerializes the ground. A central principle of my work is that of balance and imbalance and a central problem is that of how to bring the space and place of the ground into balance with what is enacted in time across its face of imbalance, how, in other words, to give temporal existence a shape. The formal geometric order helps to resist or complicate the downward pull of the earth, denying gravity in the exploration of different forms of disembodiment or virtuality. The tension of the two parts pine tree piece or the four Styrofoam piece derives from the knowledge that none of the pieces will be able to sustain this position, and will eventually topple to the floor. Time is here not a medium, but a weight and an ordeal; it does not so much pass, as press. A second reason to domesticate the form of everyday objects in geometric planes is to reinforce its inherent artificial system.

At the Sculpture Centre in New York you recently exhibited a fireplace... I know that you had been planning to do this sculpture for a long time. Can you tell me the story behind this piece of work? I know that it's a copy of a fireplace that belongs to a person you are close to.

In general my work is grounded in a personal emotional realism with a dialectic mechanism of rhetorical logic of interior monologues with myself. The title "still.life." enforces and guides the inherent contradictions and analogies of the work and helps the work to approach a zero condition, where the work stats his own void or abyss as an empty screen. The image of the title creates the ideal environment for optimum symbolic resonance. As with dreams, symbols strive toward condensation, free-association and communal resonance. They seek meanings within their sphere of associations. A lead filled bronze cast of a everyday object like a river stone or an apple or a fireplace... does not reach out for metaphors of expansion or progress like a cast of a everyday object normally does, but reverts to the ideas of impact, isolation, passivity and collapse.

The sculpture centre presents a two person exhibition by martin Boyce and me titled we burn, we shiver. This exhibition creates

ART

a sculptural conversation in which public and private space collides and the prosaic meets the romantic. Martin Boyce presents a suspended sculpture composed of standard fluorescent light fixtures in the form of a spider web. The piece fills the entirety of sculpture centre's ceiling space and hangs twenty feet above the ground. I present three works cast in bronze and filled with lead including a river rock, a bend cardboard and a fireplace. The fireplace is cast from an existing 19th century

fireplace, which belongs to my longtime companion, is built into a freestanding wall. In short, the exhibition employs displacement as a method to unmoor the familiar from a specific time and place in order to reveal a more psychologically charged state. A romantic image, the fireplace suggests an intimate, domestic space while Boyce's hard, cold fluorescents are indicative of commercial, public spaces.



UGO RONDINONE - INSTALLATION VIEW OF THE EXHIBITION "TURN BACK TIME. LET'S START THIS DAY AGAIN" AT RAUCCI/SANTAMARIA GALLERY, NAPLES 2008
COURTESY OF RAUCCI/SANTAMARIA GALLERY NAPLES, PHOTO - ENZO VELO

INTERVIEW WITH DAVID RENGGLI

ARTIST

Wild flowers in a garden of scrap iron, piles of old machinery, of electric cable, of broken valves: this might be the hypothetical description of a new work by David Renggli or a realistic one of his studio in Zurich. In fact, the Swiss artist brings together various materials, often picked up in second-hand markets. These are thus recycled objects which continue to exude an old-worldly fascination often linked to the artist's original cultural background. He is attracted by folklore traditions, that which the past has left behind. All of his works, in whatever shape they are presented (painting, sculpture or installation) always constitute a tangled weave of overlapping signs, encounters perhaps between the "black" culture that emerges from the depths and the "white" information. Renggli has an obsession: to shape that which has no shape, be it a physical factor or an emotional state. Each work of his has the punch of a wall poster, is as irreverent as a satirical pamphlet and in-your-face as an America roadside billboard. **by Milovan Farronato**

What is night for you? Many of your works have a dark side or a precarious state of visualisation... often a twilight quality... and then, to quote one title of one of your work: "It suddenly became bright again".

I was always quite attracted by the idea of another side. Sometimes the other side is very close and you can't tell where exactly the borders are. The night is real, but another reality in a very private way; people do stuff they would not do without the aura of the dark. Maybe a little bit like a mask; with a mask you dare to do things you actually don't. Do you like masks?

Can we really avoid them? I like them if they are not a necessity, if they are as changeable as the weather.

I was wondering why the word 'mask' is so negative, I have never heard this word used in a good context: you use it to say something or mainly someone is not real. It covers the real.

And so in which way does reality appear in your work? It is often surrounded by the "fog" of a consciousness that is half-asleep, or half-awake.

I like reality as a tool, to take images that are in our daily life and make them stand for reality; they are not questioned and they kind of play with this role of them sort of coming from behind, without a mask.

It was always a good start to enter a work of art in order to guide

the viewer. Harmless to start with, but when you're in it gets foggy and twisted.

But I am not so attracted by the real in this sense any more, if that answers your question.

What do you feel if I mention the concept of "Heimat", within its poetical connotation, without any political references... I mean, many of your installations are select and present elements, or fragments of the reality that is closest to you... Your beloved Zurich... Your Switzerland...

Beloved Zurich? Is this Italian humour? Is there a typical sort of Italian humour? Things that surround you do influence you in good and bad ways: regarding the elements you are mentioning, I like them but on the other hand I really hate them. Most of the time it stands for a mentality that scares me if I think of it too much, if I take it too seriously; then I sort of imitate this behaviour and drag it in to somewhere else. It is in a way also a tool, in my case a Swiss tool.

DAVID RENGGLI LIVES AND WORKS IN ZÜRICH. HE WORKS WITH SEVERAL MEDIA AS WELL AS ON INSTALLATIONS. HE IS CURRENTLY SHOWING AT GALERIE CHEZ VALENTIN, PARIS.

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