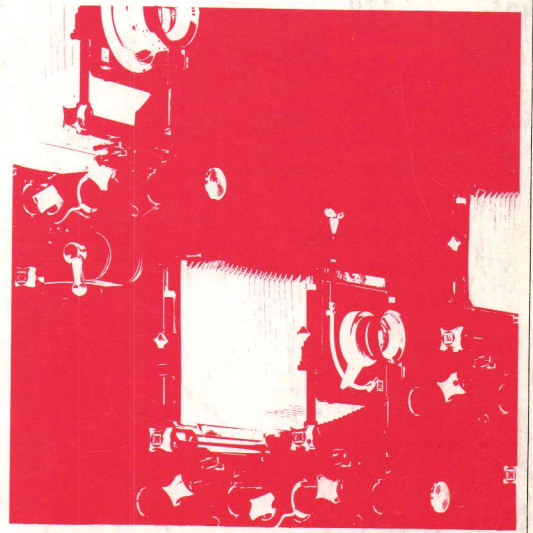


swiss design today



The Halen settlement near Bern represents a new concept in housing in that it is neither village nor suburb; it allows for closely concentrated single-family dwellings, privacy and proximity to nature. Approximately 250 inhabitants, central piazza, swimming pool, playground and sport facilities. Built on a 6½ acre clearing with a view of the Alps to the south. Each house has three levels and is entered from the rear on the middle level. Architects: Atelier 5, Bern: Erwin Fritz, Samuel Gerber, Rolf Hesterberger, Hans Hostettler, Niklaus Morgenthaler, Alfredo Pini and Fritz Thormann, 1959-1961.



DESIGN QUARTERLY 60

Guest Editor: Margit Staber

Designer: Rob Roy Kelly

Circulation: Elsa K. Larson

Design Quarterly is indexed in Art Index

Subscription rates are 4 issues \$2.00, 8 issues \$3.50, 12 issues \$5.00

Single issues 50¢, Double issues \$1.50.

Foreign postage \$1.00 for 4 issues. Design Quarterly is published by

Walker Art Center, 1710 Lyndale Avenue South, Minneapolis 3, Minnesota

Change of address: To insure receiving all copies, give the old address as well as the new one and allow five weeks for change to become effective.

WALKER ART CENTER

Minneapolis 3, Minnesota

Martin Friedman, Director

T. B. WALKER FOUNDATION TRUSTEES

President: Archie D. Walker

Vice President: Walter W. Walker

Vice President: Hudson D. Walker

Vice President: Dana C. Smith

Secretary and Treasurer: Justin V. Smith

Assistant Secretary and Assistant Treasurer: Mrs. Malcolm A. McCannel

Assistant Secretary: Theodore S. Walker

Mrs. Theodore S. Walker

Mrs. Willis J. Walker

Mrs. James van Loben Sels

Brooks Walker

Mrs. Wellington Henderson

Honorary Trustee

H. Harvard Arnason

Members

Mrs. Calvin Yeates

Mrs. Calvin Goodrich

WALKER ART CENTER BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President: Louis N. Zelle

First Vice President: Donald W. Judkins

Second Vice President: David H. Preus

Secretary-Treasurer: Martin Friedman

Pierce Butler, III

Mrs. C. Merritt Case, Jr.

John Cowles, Jr.

Harold Field

Norton Hintz

Mrs. Malcolm A. McCannel

Mrs. Richardson B. Okie

Mrs. Edmond R. Ruben

William G. Shepherd

Justin V. Smith

Philip Von Blon

Archie D. Walker

Walter W. Walker

Mrs. O. Meredith Wilson

David M. Winton

Ex-Officio

Kenneth A. W. Backstrom

Gordon A. Mikkelson

Hon. Arthur Naftalin

Swiss Design Today

DESIGN QUARTERLY 60

WALKER ART CENTER MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA

design
quarterly

Introduction

The strength and value of Swiss product design comes from a combination of seriousness and imagination, functional thinking and formal sensibility. Each of the examples on the following pages reflect these characteristics in some particular way.

This short survey cannot show all the possibilities of Swiss design, or all solutions of Swiss designers worthy of mention. Nor can the examples presented here be regarded as a mirror of an "average" standard of design in Switzerland. These selected examples demonstrate what can be done when open-minded enterprise meets a designer who places all his talents and capacities in the service of the object to be designed. This is equally true of anonymous design for products of more or less technical use as building and sanitary equipment, apparatus and instruments. Handicraft is represented by only a few examples, but one should keep in mind that a part of Swiss production employs a mixture of industrial and artisanal working methods, due to the Swiss economic structure, and this combination is above all applied to equipment for the home. Most of the examples shown originate from the fifties, some go back to the thirties, and all of them, with one or two exceptions, are on the market today.

Poor in natural resources, Swiss industry is primarily a finishing industry employing intensive working methods. Out of this has come a tradition of fine workmanship and a feeling for quality. But with the advancement of cheap industrial methods, the old tradition of design as a natural part of the whole working process necessarily loses ground, and qualified workmen become rarer while the general economic boom increases production capacities. The result is "styling" and superfluous design. At present this is a crucial problem for large industry while smaller manufacturers can still depend on traditional values.

In this context, a basic problem for Switzerland is the development of a comprehensive design education aimed at both designers and consumers. Switzerland has never had a professional design

1. SINAR interchangeable view camera for the professional photographer. Based on the "construction unit system." Accessories and attachments for various sizes and types of photography can be added to the basic unit, the SINAR STANDARD. The principle of the SINAR camera was developed in 1947 by the Swiss photographer Karl Koch.

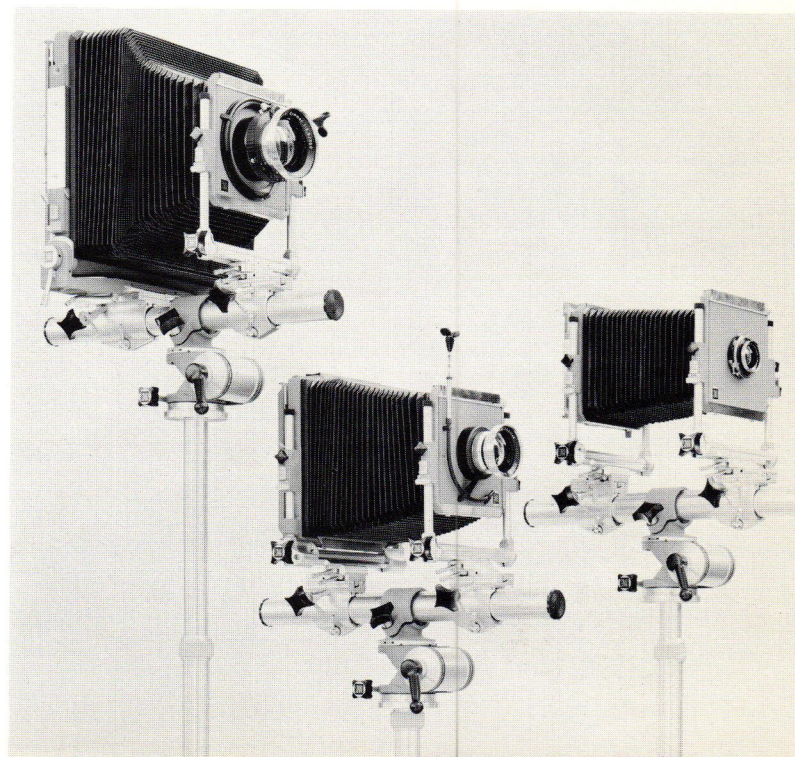
M: SINAR—Fachkamera-Bau, Schaffhausen

Key

D: Designer

Di: Distributor

M: Manufacturer



training program. Product design has followed the path of architecture. When during the thirties Europeans felt the need for re-designing human environments, it was above all a movement of architects under the influence of Le Corbusier (who left his native Switzerland in 1917 for Paris) and the ideas of the Bauhaus. When the now legendary "Neubuehl" settlement was built in Zürich in 1930-32 under the patronage of the Swiss Werkbund (Swiss Association of Art and Industry, founded in 1913), no furniture existed that could be placed in these flats to participate in their clearly and flexibly designed plans. So the architects themselves began to design furniture. Today, half of all Swiss designers are architects and the other major portion comes from the "Kunstgewerbeschulen" (schools of arts and crafts), primarily from the Zürich school and its class for Design.

This state of things accounts for the fact that there are few full-time professional designers in Switzerland and that the greater part of design activity is concerned with the immediate human environment. For years people in all design areas have discussed founding a special institute of design and its possible organization.

The Werkbund has played a considerable role in promoting good design. In 1949 the Werkbund initiated an exhibition of good design at the Annual Trade Fair in Basel, since then repeated every year, and in 1952 combined this with a design award "Die Gute Form" given by an international jury for outstanding Swiss products. The Werkbund also published the "Swiss Catalogue of Goods," a compilation of quality products for consumer information.

Today, well-designed Swiss products can be found in both low and high-price ranges. But it is becoming difficult to maintain and expand what has been achieved in the face of easy sales promotion of fancy design, modernism and romanticism. The problem of human needs versus high-pressure advertising is not only a Swiss problem but of international concern.

Margit Staber, Zürich, 1964

