Milch

an exhibition accompanying the launch of the French/Italian translation of Josef Müller-Brockmann’s book Grid systems in graphic design

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Growing up in Switzerland it’s very common to have childhood memories of sitting half asleep at the kitchen table in the early morning, munching cereals, deciphering all sorts of packaging information and labels in three languages. Milch – Lait – Latte an exhibition accompanying the launch of the French/Italian translation of Josef Müller-Brockmann’s book

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Milch – Lait – Latte thus became the tagline and renaissance Antiqua typefaces. typeface and the English with a combination of baroque mimicking the clichéed tastes of French and English culture. The same too, but different printers set the text in typefaces including new visual material, for example works of Dutch or Danish and Dutch in 1937 and 1938. Tschichold published of 1935 by Jan Tschichold, which was published another rather odd example is the book Typographische systeme featuring Josef Müller-Brockmann’s strategies of translations. Additionally a project of images taken from the web and social media featuring Josef Müller-Brockmann’s Raster-systeme is an ode to the congenial, slightly cultish approval of the book worldwide.

In 1947 Hermann Eidenbenz designed this strict yet playful layout for a book describing the Swiss film industry. The book was published in German, and shortly after in French and English. Most interestingly, the layout was kept the same, the clichés of the images remained the same too, but different printers set the text in typefaces mimicking the clichéd tastes of French and English culture. While the German edition spurred a modern Akzidenz Grotesk, the French edition did with a font Didot-style typeface and the English with a combination of baroque and renaissance Antiqua typefaces.

1949, two books by Rudolf Hostettler

Regarding translations, Rudolf Hostettler’s publication known as The printer’s terms is probably the most ambitious and complete. What he published first in 1949 was a modest, small booklet listing translations of terms of the printing industry in four and sometimes more languages. It also gave a short general introduction to useful printing and typography vocabulary along with beautiful illustrations of printing processes. In the following years Hostettler continued to edit end expand this collection, compiling hundreds of file cards with notes on more and more terms, and more and more translations. The long expected second edition was interrupted by the death of Hostettler in 1981, at the age of only 61. The second publication on show is simply titled Type and is a book of the same year, which illustrates how Hostettler skilfully varied his styles, mastering books of both progressive and traditional design and content.

1959, Karl Gerstner and Markus Kutter

Die neue Graphik, published by Niggli in 1959, is surely one of the most iconic multilingual books. The title and blurb, in three languages, sits in rigid lower case Akzidenz Grotesk on the cardboard case – and the title is repeated in varying colours on the cover itself. The designer and co-author Karl Gerstner stays true to a doctime three column layout, but also improvises, in a concrete poetry manner, when he adds for example the titles abbreviated to nonsense initials “NG”, “naga” and “nag” on the spine. The book was published with a slipcase that mentions Niggli as a publisher. Conspicuously it also came out as an “English edition” with only few changes on the title page, and a note mentioning the English distributor Alec Tiranti on the slipcase.

ABC, Impressum — Impressum — Impressum

A still barely documented publishing project are the books by ABC Verlag Zürich. Hans Neuburg realised several books with this artisy publisher, keeping to the format of portfolio-books and propagating good work in fields such as exhibition design, design for industry or design for chemical industry in particular. The layout of the books was often arranged by graphic designer Walter Bangerter and became known for the notorious use of three columns for the three languages. In fact, for the content Bangerter left this rigid layout and arranged the text more freely. Left to explain is why the editors decided to give the colophon in three languages as well (Autoren — Auteurs — Authors), but added as the title: Impressum — Impressum — Impressum.

Journals putting Swiss graphic design on an international stage

Neue Grafik, the definitely most infamous graphic design magazine project, was launched in 1958 in three languages, German, English and French. The editors, notably Josef Müller-Brockmann, Richard Paul Loehse, Carlo Vivarelli and Hans Neuburg, had set the bar high and aimed at an international public right from the start. With Swiss graphic design being a good export already, they probably had a good reason for their optimism. The steady ground they were relying on had been prepared by other magazines, such as Graphis, in print since 1944 and since the first issue in German, English and French, as well as Typographische Monatsblätter (TM), the more down-hom journal for print- ers and typesetters which was published since 1933 and included French contributions from 1948 on and English translations or contributions first only sporadically, more seriously from 1952 onwards. It was these magazines that spread Swiss graphic design to an international audience of graphic designers (Neue Grafik), typographers (TM) and advertisement agencies (Graphis).


The most dogmatic of all the multilingual publications is Josef Müller-Brockmann’s Gestaltungssprakhe des Grafikers of 1961. Its cover design is pure typographic dogma and repeats the title in three languages – and does it three times, like a mantra: on the dust jacket, the cover and the first page. For the content he adds a column, so it’s a four column grid that allows for more white space. Later editions though seem less compelling, somehow neutralised with the use of Helvetica and even more white space. Also worth noting is how the later publication by Müller-Brockmann A history of visual communication of 1971 is first published in German, French and English – but its second edition drops the French and when Müller-Brockmann publishes Grid systems in graphic design in 1981, French was nowhere nearer.

1998, Slightly Postmodern

In his design for the book 100 + 3 Plakate on Swiss poster design, Siegfried Odermatt plays with the grid and languages, mimicking the Swiss Style dogma of a three-column layout for three languages – while he’s immediately softening the dogma with the use of three typefaces: Futura for German, Giff for English, and a Didot for French. These typefaces transport a certain cultural “flavour”, and Odermatt obviously knows how to play with these clichés.

Since 1987, Jost Hochuli’s details

30 years ago Jost Hochuli first published his pamphlet, or manual with the title Detail in typog- raphy. There have been only very few changes and updates applied to it since, and it’s still being printed today. The booklets content is brief and pre- cise and has surprising literary quali- ties, which makes it a publication that distributes easily across continents – and across alphabets: Most recently it has been published in Japanese, and two Chinese versions are to come in 2018. There’s hardly a more often translated text on typography worldwide.

Campgrafic Editors and Editions B42

The last group in the vitrine shows two positions of most recent translation projects. Books by the Spanish publisher Campgrafic as well as by the Paris based publisher B42. Both invest a great amount of time and care in the translation of international literature on graphic design and typography into Spanish and French. Nevertheless it’s interesting to see the two projects alongside. While Campgrafic zooms in on the personality of the authors, with their portraits and seriousness on the cover, B42 trusts a more pop identity with colours and type.