INTRODUC-
TION

1.1 A closing and an opening

On the evening of 18 October 2002, a crowd assembled in the foyer of the Museum für Gestaltung in Zurich (MfGZ).[1] These people had been invited to the opening of *Swiss Design 2002: Netzwerke / Réseaux / Networks*, an exhibition organised by the Museum in collaboration with the Federal Office of Culture (FOC) to present the work of the young designers who had just won the highest design prize in Switzerland, the Swiss Design Awards (SDA). It was the end of a week of nice autumnal weather and the mood was festive. The guests – mostly designers, members of the cultural scene and representatives of the Swiss government – were undoubtedly looking forward to the *apéro riche* that was about to be served. But the sense of anticipation in the air went beyond the promise of canapés. This was not just a regular exhibition opening: the guests had come to witness a special event that had been years in the making. Shortly after 7:30 p.m., the speeches began. Patrizia Crivelli, the secretary of the FOC's Design Service and one of the curators, announced:

An exhibition opening is always – or hopefully almost always – a nice thing. For us – the Federal Office of Culture – this evening is doubly important and joyful: it is both the closing point and the starting point of a major project. On the one hand, it marks the end of the reorganisation of design funding at the federal level and its implementation. On the other hand, it is the starting point of this new means of support, which aims to be contemporary and up to date.[2]

1 A list of the abbreviations used in this book is provided in the appendix.

2 "Eine Ausstellungseröffnung ist ja eigentlich immer – oder hoffentlich doch meistens – eine schöne Sache. Dieser Abend ist für uns – das Bundesamt für Kultur – doppelt wichtig und freudig: Ist er doch Schluss- und Startpunkt eines grossen Projektes gleichzeitig. Einerseits Schlusspunkt der Reorganisation der Designförderung auf Bundesebene und Implementierung derselben. Andererseits Startpunkt dieser neuen Förderung, die den Anspruch hat zeitgemäss und aktuell zu sein." Crivelli 2002b.

The evening marked a symbolic turning point in federal design promotion in Switzerland. This vernissage was the end of a five-year-long process to bring the SDA in line with new professional practices and the needs of designers. In fact, *Swiss Design 2002* represented the most significant changes to the SDA since their inauguration in 1918.

In the introduction to the *Swiss Design 2002* exhibition catalogue, Crivelli noted that the FOC was adopting a role "as a node in the so-called 'design network'".[3] In other words, the SDA were to get much closer to the field and become a member of the scene. For the FOC, taking such a proactive position was unprecedented, and it led to longstanding changes in Swiss design promotion. Having become closer to practitioners, the SDA soon grew controlled by a small section of the design scene. Graphic design was particularly affected. The discipline became controlled by designers stemmed from a new generation of graphic designers, a "new school" that had emerged because of professional changes that took place in the 1990s. These newcomers, who at the time were outsiders to the design establishment, would soon play an increasing role within the SDA, so much so that their generation would define the awards. In this sense, the diagram featured in the catalogue of the 2002 exhibition depicting the "Swiss Design Connection" augured the importance of these designers and their networks for the next two decades (Fig. 1.1).

3 Crivelli 2002a, 170.

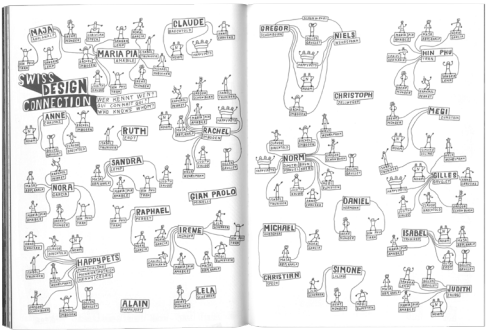

Fig. 1.1 "Swiss Design Connection" in the 2002 catalogue showing who knew whom amongst the 2002 winners. Illustration by Bastien Aubry. Design: Elektrosmog and Julia Born.

Ten years after the SDA were relaunched, I graduated from the *Ecole Cantonale d'Art de Lausanne* (University of Art and Design Lausanne, ECAL) with a Bachelor's in graphic design. Along many others in my cohort, I did not hesitate and immediately submitted my graduation project to the SDA. (Quite deservedly, I did not win.) During my studies, I had followed the annual SDA selection closely. The graphic design that won represented a gold standard – albeit one that was relevant only for a certain portion of the field that I thought represented the élite. I respected the design language of the works that won and attempted to emulate it. In my eyes and those of my fellow students, the SDA epitomised a benchmark in terms of recognition. Winning was a sure sign that you were amongst the best designers in the field, which in my mind was synonymous with a successful career. I also knew many designers previously awarded: most of my teachers had either won or served on the jury. For most designers of my generation and of similar training, the SDA were thus a barometer of critical acclaim. They played the role of an arbiter ruling over what we perceived to be the absolute best graphic design in Switzerland.

However, the SDA had not always played this role. In the 1990s, they had fallen out of favour. Consequently, their relaunch in 2002 was not simply an attempt to bring them up to date with new practices, but also addressed the harsh criticism to which they were subjected in the specialist press, who felt that the prizes did not represent the design scene accurately enough. Judging by the SDA's presence on the graphic design scene today, their reorganisation was a success. Yet despite their influence, the SDA have been the subject of surprisingly little scholarship in the past decades. The only significant publication on the topic was commissioned by the FOC for the 80th anniversary of the SDA in 1997.[4] Entitled *Made in Switzerland*, it situated the awards historically and critically, and helped the Design Service to formulate the SDA's 2002 relaunch.[5] The competition's catalogues between 1989 and 2011 and the exhibition documents, blog posts and sporadic publications thereafter sometimes included self-reflective texts, but

stopped short of offering a critical or historical discussion of the awards and their reorganisation. The effects of the relaunch itself were not analysed, not even on the centenary of federal design promotion in 2017.

4 Crivelli *et al.* 1997.
5 Crivelli & Imboden 1997, 86; FOC 1999a.

This book sets to correct the record by analysing the 2002 relaunch of the SDA in relation to changes in the design profession, and by offering insights into its aftermath. It revolves around a central question: what was the effect of the SDA 2002 relaunch on the field of Swiss graphic design? To answer it, I offer two perspectives and a series of hypotheses. On the one hand, I analyse the SDA relaunch from the perspective of federal design promotion. After falling out of favour, the awards now regained a prestigious status. I argue that they succeeded in doing so thanks to the type of work they promoted and to the visual language they used to communicate. There was also a shift in design patronage. The type of work awarded evolved, which contributed to the creation of a design scene located in the "cultural" sector. This shift in design promotion took place in parallel with the emergence of a new professional identity for graphic designers, to which I refer as a professional shift. The latter opens my second perspective. In the years preceding the relaunch of the SDA, a "new school" of designers emerged. These no longer identified with their predecessors' models, and therefore developed their own. I suggest that these designers, most of them from the same generation, used the promotional shift to support their new definition of the profession. They leveraged the awards for their own purposes and redefined them to suit their image, which had a dual influence on their success. Not only did they win the awards more often than others, but they were also able to change the awards' definition of "good design" so that it aligned with their practices. The SDA thus became both proof and harbingers of success.

1.2 The Swiss Design Awards

1.2.1 Organisation

Today, the SDA are overseen by the FOC in Bern. The 2009 law on the promotion of culture makes the FOC one of two instances of cultural policy for the Confederation. The other is the Swiss Arts Council Pro Helvetia, a public-law foundation based in Zurich which promotes Swiss culture abroad and supports cultural exchanges between regions.[6] The FOC operates within the Federal Department of Home Affairs (FDHA) and is responsible for federal cultural policy. Its activities are broad and are separated into sections that are themselves subdivided into different services.[7] Sections have assignments such as contributing to the preservation of historical monuments, managing museums and libraries, and supporting music education. Others promote, preserve and transmit cultural diversity. The Cultural Creativity section manages the SDA. It supports artistic creation in the visual arts (including architecture), design, literature, the performing arts and music. It does so with four aims: encouraging exceptional cultural creation, awarding cultural actors, promoting these actors, and increasing the general public's awareness of the cultural scene. In this book, I use the term "design promotion" to refer to these four activities when they apply to design. Two of the Cultural Creativity section's most direct tools for promotion are purchasing works and awarding a series of prizes. The FOC has full powers over the awards in terms of setting the rules and the monetary value of the prize given out.[8] Besides design, other prizes cover the fine arts, music, literature, theatre, dance and film. All of them operate independently but similarly to the SDA. They are organised by their respective services (Art, Design, Literature, Dance and Theatre, and Music) and are currently gathered under the banner of the Swiss Culture Awards.[9]

6 Federal Chancellery of Switzerland 2009. For a full discussion of Pro Helvetia's history, see Hauser *et al.* 2010.
7 Federal Chancellery of Switzerland 2020.
8 Federal Chancellery of Switzerland 2016.
9 See https://www.schweizerkulturpreise.ch/ (accessed 1 April 2021).

Submitting work to the SDA is free of charge, which is rare for design competitions. The awards give out prizes of CHF 25,000 to approximately 17 designers every year, which is an unparalleled sum of money both in Switzerland and internationally. They are given on a portfolio basis, meaning that applicants are neither required to present a project proposal, nor are they means-tested. Dossiers can be submitted independently or as a collaboration with others. The type of work accepted covers a wide range of practices, including graphic design, products and objects, fashion and textile design, photography, scenography and mediation and, since 2022, media and interaction design and design research.[10] Designers are allowed to submit their work eight times, and can win a maximum of three times. The jury of the competition is composed of the seven members of an extra-parliamentary commission, the Federal Design Commission (FDC),[11] and the experts invited by the same. From a legal perspective, the members of the FDC are appointed by the Federal Council with a four-year mandate that can be renewed three times.[12] In practice, the FDC or the FOC usually put forward potential members; the Federal Council then follows this advice and nominates them. This means that members of the FDC can preserve continuity in the commission's politics, even as its members rotate. The competition takes place over two rounds.[13] In the first, the jury selects applicants based on a digital portfolio. The number of designers who make it to the first round is not fixed and has ranged between 33 and 60 in the past 30 years. These designers are then invited to display their work in an exhibition which serves as the second round of the competition. The jury assesses the works in person and selects the winners, who receive the substantial monetary prize. The exhibition is usually supported by an events programme and a publication in one form or another, which aims to help designers connect with the industry.[14]

10 FOC 2019.
11 The FDC was called the Federal Commission of the Applied Arts (FCAA) until 2002.
12 Federal Chancellery of Switzerland 1998, Art. 8*g* and 8*i*; Crivelli 1999b.
13 FOC 2019.
14 Münch & Staub 2005. Needless to say, 2020 was an unusual year during which the exhibition did not take place. Because the jury could not assess the competition, the designers selected for the first round each received CHF 10,000. Furthermore, the FOC spent an additional CHF 100,000 in direct purchases for the Federal Art Collection.

1.2.2 The power of the Swiss Design Awards

The SDA are influential on the relatively small scene of Swiss design, both in terms of reputation and financial impact (which some designers recognise as being equally important).[15] While the awards are not followed widely by the general population, the SDA exhibition, which is usually organised during Art Basel, benefits from a high footfall.[16] Winning means gaining visibility and sometimes accessing a market that was previously out of reach. It can also help to secure teaching assignments. Finally, the substantial monetary prize allows designers to undertake independent projects, work on commissions with small budgets, or simply pay for the costs of launching or running a studio. It momentarily frees designers from commercial requirements and allows them to focus purely on advancing the design discourse.[17] In summary, the SDA wield consequential power on the design scene that goes beyond their impact on individual designers, and includes funding, visibility and connections as well as an impact on careers and practices.

15 Berthod *et al.* 2020b; Windlin quoted in Coen 2005, 58.
16 More than 11,000 visitors saw the SDA over a single week in 2018. Comparatively, the Museum für Gestaltung in Zurich welcomed approximately 40,000 visitors in the year 2017. Fiore 2019, 6; Hellmüller & Wildhaber 2018.
17 Berthod *et al.* 2020b.

Though the SDA give out money, their power is not just economic. Winning also means getting access to symbolic capital. There is thus an ambiguous relationship at the core of the competition. The connection between the sociological meaning of awards and the economy they create means that they have been studied by scholars across these fields. James English, a literary scholar specialising in sociology and economics, has explained that the etymological roots of the term "prize" point to notions of money and exchange – although an award is also a "gift" that cannot be purchased, or else it would void its symbolic value.[18] By applying the theories of the sociologist Pierre Bourdieu on symbolic capital to awards, English argued that they are part of a hidden "economy of prestige" (others have called it an "economy of esteem") in which individuals compete for recognition.[19] The sociologist Pierre-Michel Menger referred to the ubiquity of "comparison tournaments"

in creative work, whose presence is unmatched in any other type of career (excepted sports) because it is characterised by uncertainty.[20] Similarly, the economist Bruno S. Frey has argued that awards are particularly important in the cultural field, because prosperity is rarely recognised as a marker of critical success.[21] Disciplines such as graphic design give special importance to prizes because these produce status, generate prestige and bring recognition within a peer group – characteristics that are otherwise elusive in this field.[22] In other words, the SDA create a hierarchy in a discipline where social positions are uncertain. Additionally, they define the parameters of "good" design and thereby influence its production.

18 English 2005, 6–7.
19 Brennan & Pettit 2004; English 2014, 121–124.
20 Menger 2009, 10–11, 418.
21 Frey 2006, 380; Frey & Gallus 2014, 3.
22 Frey 2006, 380; Frey & Neckermann 2008, 199.

It is understood that there is no consensus on what constitutes "good" design. It is defined differently across fragmented scenes which each have clear ideas and either spoken or unspoken rules governing their outputs.[23] At any given time, different schools of thought have existed in Switzerland, often at regional level, and this has created heated debates.[24] Design competitions did not escape these discussions. In her research on poster awards and exhibitions in the 1940s and 1950s, the art and design historian Sara Zeller notably outlined how the competition *Die besten Plakate/Les meilleures affiches* (The Best [Swiss] Posters) was ruled by specific preferences to the extent that it became a kind of "good taste police" on the design scene.[25] This also applied to the promotion of fine arts. The art historian Gioia Dal Molin's study of governmental and non-governmental fine arts promotion in Switzerland between 1950 and 1980 offers insights into the evolution of the Swiss Art Award from what was seen primarily as financial support in the 1950s and 1960s to what became a prize in the 1970s.[26] In her research, Dal Molin outlines the impact of changing the criteria to define what art (and which artists) should be supported, and discusses the debates that have surrounded the mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion of art promotion at a federal level.[27] Design and art

promotion and their juries have thus played a defining role on the national scene.

23 Bourdieu 2016 (1992).
24 Klein & Bischler 2021.
25 Zeller 2021a; Zeller 2021b.
26 Dal Molin 2018, 324–330.
27 Dal Molin 2018, 328.

The question, then, of who defines "good" design is as important as how it is defined. The SDA bestow an unparalleled amount of symbolic capital, and so they play a significant role in determining what Bourdieu calls the rules of the field.[28] This definition happens in a loop. The jury – which includes graphic designers – awards certain practitioners whose work aligns with the jury's ideals; these winners then assume the role of paragons on the scene and thereby confirm the jury's status.[29] As English has argued, this does not imply any cynicism on the part of the jury members, but neither does it mean that they are beyond economic or self-interest:

In fact, the two views are merely obverse and inverse of the same fundamental misconception of the relation between habitus and field, a relation which normally secures a "good fit" between one's genuine inclinations, one's designated role, and one's best opportunities for advancement.[30]

28 Bourdieu 1977; 1993.
29 Bourdieu 2016 (1979).
30 English 2005, 122.

Over time, the jury's interests evolved and so did the SDA's definition of "good" design. From the 1980s onwards, graphic designers increasingly separated their practice into two fields, broadly categorised as commercial (or industrial) and cultural (including authorial, self-initiated and/or experimental). This had an impact on the SDA's choice of awardees.

Before the 1980s, practitioners worked indiscriminately across both cultural and commercial fields. Many of the most emblematic examples of graphic design history

are deeply embedded in advertising and industry. Practitioners still study Cassandre's advertisements for a fortified wine, Piet Zwart's catalogue selling cables, Herbert Matter's tourism brochures and Josef Müller-Brockmann's campaigns for public safety alongside their work for opera companies, theatres and art exhibitions.[31] The corporate identity work carried out in the 1960s and 1970s for multinationals such as Olivetti, Lufthansa and Knoll is analysed by academics and admired by designers, who rush to buy facsimiles or coffee table books on these programmes.[32] From the 1980s onwards, however, the scene became increasingly divided. Designers belonged either to the cultural or to the commercial sector.

31 See for instance Jubert 2005; Hollis 2005 (2001); 2006; Meggs & Purvis 2006.
32 Brook, Shaughnessy & Schrauwen 2014; Fornari & Turrini 2022; Shaughnessy & Brook 2014.

The terms "commercial" and "cultural" are imprecise and disputed. As one of the designer I spoke to put it, a poster for a theatre is still an advertisement; he went on to say that it serves the same basic function as yogurt packaging.[33] Yet as one of his colleagues also argued, a museum does not rely on the sale of a catalogue to fund its activities, and this gives the designer more leeway to experiment with its format and design language.[34] Because the distinction between commercial and cultural design is not clear, it can be difficult to assign a project to either category. I have been using an admittedly weak test to indicate whether design is more likely to be cultural or commercial. The test cannot rely on visual codes, because the visual language of "cultural" design often trickles down into commercial practices, and certain clients knowingly use a cultural or experimental appearance to sell their products.[35] Instead, it focuses on the client-designer relationship. If the designer is subordinate to the client's marketing imperatives, then the outcome is likely to be "commercial" design, whereas if the designer is able to shape contents in a way that is relatively free from the need to market a product – in other words, if the client does not rely on visual communication to sell it – then the outcome is more likely to be considered as "cultural", "conceptual" or "experimental" design.

33 Party 2021.
34 Gavillet 2017.

Frank 1997; Pountain & Robins 2000; Nancarrow & Nancarrow 2007. I once witnessed this trickle-down effect at first hand in a "commercial" branding agency in London who had prepared a mood board for the visual identity of a large corporate client. The board was made of references from the most left-field "cultural" projects that had come out recently. The final identity for the client featured many watered down, cherry-picked design elements from the mood board, in effect giving it the appearance of a cutting-edge proposal without it being supported by a strong design concept.

To add to the confusion, the dichotomy between commerce and culture tends to apply to the designers' professional identity as opposed to their work. Those who see themselves as part of the cultural sector often have commercial clients as well, though they rarely feature the latter prominently in their portfolios, conferences or monographs. Yet while these terms are imprecise, they are used by designers, are immediately understood, and are therefore still useful. Though imperfect, this distinction reflects the reality of the design field. This was also evident in the SDA's new approach: these prizes became synonymous with the cultural scene. From the late 1990s onwards, the SDA exclusively recognised graphic design that had been commissioned by cultural clients or that was the product of self-initiated projects; this then led to a redefinition of what "good" design was supposed to be.

1.3 Design promotion as a lens

1.3.1 Reading between the lines of promotion

In this book, I look at the field of graphic design in Switzerland through the lens of the SDA. This perspective is therefore intrinsically partial in all senses of the term: it is incomplete, biased and reflects the jury's preferences. Nevertheless, it enables me to understand how the field was determined, what type of design came to be defined as the "best" and how, and why certain professional models were put forward to the detriment of others. To avoid a distorted perspective through the selective lens of the SDA, I must read between the lines of design promotion. I will therefore first address several issues pertaining to its historiography.

Today, the SDA are open both to anyone residing in Switzerland and to Swiss nationals worldwide. This flexible approach is noteworthy because 20th century art, architecture and design promotion were often tied

to notions of national identity and cultural diplomacy. As the design historians Kjetil Fallan, Grace Lees-Maffei and many others have shown, design exhibitions and competitions were used to mythologise national identities in Belgium, Brazil, the Netherlands and Scandinavia among others.[36] Switzerland was no exception. Pro Helvetia used culture as a form of spiritual national defence (more commonly known in the country as *geistige Landesverteidigung*), while poster competitions and national and international travelling exhibitions were used either to consolidate a cohesive national identity or as forms of soft diplomacy.[37] However, from the mid-1960s onwards, these concepts lost their relevance.[38] The name of the Swiss Design Awards might admittedly imply a relationship to a national label – "Swiss Graphic Design"[39] – even if recent discussions on Swiss graphic design history have concluded that a monolithic interpretation of that label does not reflect reality.[40] By the time the SDA were relaunched in 2002, the relation to a national label was no longer part of the discussion. Today, despite their name, notions of national style or identity are no longer discussed or considered in the SDA.

36 Fallan 2007; Fallan & Lees-Maffei 2016; Meroz 2016; Meroz & Gimeno-Martínez 2016; Rezende 2016; Serulus 2018; Teilmann-Lock 2016.
37 Maurer 2010; Milani 2010; Mohler 2018; Zeller 2018; 2021a; 2021c; Zeller 2021d, 71–95.
38 Rüegg 2010, 158.
39 Früh *et al.* 2021. For a discussion of the label and an overview of the literature, see Lzicar & Fornari 2016.
40 Klein & Bischler 2021; Lzicar & Fornari 2016; Lzicar & Unger 2016.

Nevertheless, the semi-national framework implied by a study of the SDA such as I am undertaking here is not without relevance. Inspired by the design historian Anna Calvera, scholars have been arguing for a historiography that simultaneously encompasses local, national and global contexts.[41] Although I here analyse the graphic design that has been awarded prizes in a national competition, I follow the example of those scholars in that I approach my topic, not from the perspective of the nation state, but instead by focusing on the local and regional scenes of design promotion that are in fact well-connected despite a certain degree of fragmentation. My approach is thus in line with that of the research project *Swiss Graphic Design and Typography Revisited*, which aimed to revisit how Swiss design history was

constructed and disseminated, and which has also provided me with a framework for my research.[42]

41 Calvera 2005; Gimmi 2014, 9; Lees-Maffei & Fallan 2016; Lees-Maffei & Houze 2010, 467–509; Meroz & Gimeno-Martínez 2016; Serulus 2018, 25–27; Woodham 2005; Yagou 2015.

42 *Swiss Graphic Design and Typography Revisited* was funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation as part of its Sinergia programme and ran from 2016 to 2020. Its results are published in Barbieri *et al.* 2021, Bischler *et al.* 2021, Fornari *et al.* 2021a and Kaufmann, Schneemann & Zeller 2021.

The SDA promoted what their jury decided were the best examples of graphic design. Narrowing this selection further, the awards' increasing focus on self-initiated, cultural work automatically excluded practitioners working on commercial projects as well as those whom the graphic designer Cornel Windlin described somewhat disparagingly as the "bread-and-butter" type, namely jobbing designers.[43] My analysis of design promotion therefore meant approaching a doubly narrow selection of Swiss graphic design, which presents three primary challenges. First, the mythopoeic nature of the awards contributed to a process described by the historian Hayden White as the narrativization of the field.[44] Secondly, the SDA have tended to obscure design histories existing outside institutionalised practices (such as those promoted by the SDA).[45] Thirdly, as the design historian Victor Margolin has argued, the awards' aesthetic judgement resulted in the canonisation of certain designers and the disappearance of others, despite the fact that the latter may have played an important role in the development of the profession.[46] By singling out artefacts for their exceptional qualities, the SDA hierarchised the field and provided the basis for heroic figures and a canon to emerge.[47] This fabrication of a neat narrative has hindered the creation of what the design historian Martha Scotford has termed a "messy history" that would instead include less recognised figures.[48]

43 Barbieri 2021a.
44 Fallan 2007; White 1980.
45 Julier 1997, 2–3.
46 Margolin 2014 (1994).
47 Triggs 2009, 329.
48 Scotford 2014 (1994).

All the same, I cannot exclude the artefacts and their designers from the history of the 2002 relaunch; as the design historian Catherine Moriarty has pointed out, "design histories without designers remain rare".[49]

Nevertheless, I want to avoid the "objectification, personification, and glorification" that have characterised the last 50 years of Swiss graphic design history.[50] A framework grounded in the sociology of art enabled me to avoid these pitfalls, notably by situating design within networks. From the 1960s onwards, Raymonde Moulin pioneered the idea that art was the product of cooperation between actors.[51] Later on, she expanded on the role played by generational, affinity-based or aesthetically grounded networks, which she argued were more important in the cultural world than in any other.[52] In the 1980s, Howard S. Becker developed the notion of "art worlds" which encompassed all the actors involved in the production of art. His ideas, which have been since confirmed in countless empirical studies,[53] can be applied equally to the design world, which is made up of networks of people whose cooperation produces "the kind of [design] that the [design] world is noted for".[54] His work influenced Bourdieu's concept of fields of cultural production, which the latter had been using since the late 1960s.[55] However, Bourdieu also argued that Becker ignored the objective relationships that ruled fields, namely by envisaging artists without paying attention to the structures that influenced their work.[56] Indeed, for Bourdieu, habitus and symbolic capital ruled the art world. As a result of taking an approach here that was informed by Bourdieu and others, I needed to envisage the "design world" surrounding the SDA as the result of various levels of power relationships that were taking place – from details of the prize-winning works to the constitution of the scene in general – while also understanding that designers and juries were similarly engaged in relationships ruled by their own habitus and search for status. I refer to these networks as networks of promotion.

49 Moriarty 2016, 52.
50 Fornari et al. 2021b.
51 Moulin 1967 cited in Heinich 2004, 58–59.
52 Moulin 1992, 252.
53 See Buscatto 2013 for an overview of empirical studies relying on the concept of "art worlds".
54 Becker 1982, X.
55 Bourdieu 1993; Champagne & Christin 2012, 147–183.
56 Bourdieu 1991b; 1993; Fowler 1997, 99–100.

1.3.2 The networks of promotion

Becker and Bourdieu's ideas led me to analyse the projects that were awarded in the SDA because of interactions between the protagonists and parameters involved, rather than as unconnected, ground-breaking artefacts. The SDA themselves constituted one of the protagonists. They offered financial support, organised exhibitions and events and published catalogues. Moreover, the SDA were also composed of sub-networks. For instance, the FOC's employees in the Design Service, the FDC (and its predecessor the FCAA), the invited experts and even the nominees and awardees could be connected in ways that often intertwined. The notion of networks of promotion therefore applied on both the large-scale and the small-scale. It provided me with a basis for much of this book and helped me to avoid a mythopoeic narrative of the awards. It also led me to discover the actual networks of promotion that I reveal in my fifth chapter, where I discuss the notion of social networks in greater detail. By analysing these networks, I offer a more complex reading of designers' success, suggesting that the awards were not simply given in recognition of the best design, but also helped to define the overall scene.

To retrace these networks of design promotion – which meant both reading "between the lines" and finding the connections between their protagonists – I relied on a visual analysis of artefacts, on archival sources and on interviews. I focus on artefact analysis in my third chapter, where I discuss my methodology in depth. Most of my work here, however, has been informed by oral history. Oral history has a long and established history and has been described in detail in recent overview studies.[57] It has also already been applied to design history and employed in conjunction with archival sources.[58] As the design historian and oral history specialist Linda Sandino has argued, oral history is particularly useful for challenging narratives and recovering hitherto unheard voices; it can thus help me here to read between the lines of design promotion.[59] I relied on semi-structured interviews, which work with specific questions while also leaving space for new meanings to emerge from

conversations.[60] Excerpts from many of these conversations were published in the second volume of *Swiss Graphic Design Histories*, which disseminated the results of the research project *Swiss Graphic Design and Typography Revisited*.[61] In most of these interviews, I relied on being an insider – a graphic designer who is himself part of the Swiss network – in order to gain access to knowledge that might not otherwise have been discussed.

57 For recent overviews, see Perks & Thomson 2016; Ritchie 2015; Thompson & Bornat 2017.
58 Donnelly 2006; Ishino 2006; Sandino 2006; 2013; Sandino & Partington 2013.
59 Sandino 2006, 275.
60 Galletta 2013, 1–2.
61 Barbieri *et al.* 2021a. For our project's position on oral history, see Barbieri *et al.* 2021b.

1.3.3 Writing from within

As I mentioned above, I trained at ECAL, where I was taught by several of the designers who sat on the juries of the SDA or the Most Beautiful Swiss Books (MBSB) competition, or who won such awards themselves. After graduating, I worked for one of them; I also met many more while working on this book. In these meetings I was oft perceived by the interviewees primarily as a designer rather than a researcher. This gave me what Becker and his colleague Robert Faulkner have called a "view from the bandstand".[62] More prosaically, I was an active participant in the world that I was studying. I should therefore acknowledge my own place in these networks, which presented both advantages and challenges.

62 Faulkner & Becker 2008.

On the one hand, I had access to tacit knowledge. As a designer, I knew the visual and professional codes ruling the different circles of our field, and I was privy to the inner workings of a studio, relationships with clients and colleagues, and the challenges and interests involved in specific commissions. This gave me an insider perspective in what early scholars of auto-ethnography would have described as research into my "own people", though the comparison stops here since my analyses did not focus on my own experiences.[63] In my interviews, this helped me to understand implied value judgements and half-formulated sentences. It also enabled me to formulate questions and identify certain sticking points.

On the other hand, in the words of Bourdieu, being indigenous to the system was precisely what shielded it from me.[64] I initially submitted to the "collective beliefs" ruling the scene, which sometimes skewed my questions and delayed my findings. Because of my proximity to some of my interviewees, I was sometimes unable to ask provocative questions – or at least had to tread very carefully. Moreover, the designers interviewed wanted to control their personal image, and it was sometimes arduous to draw information from them that did not fit their personal narratives. In other words, my professional identity was both Trojan horse and Achilles' heel – useful in some respects, but a hindrance in others.

63 Adams, Ellis & Holman 2017; Hayano 1979, 99.
64 Bourdieu 2002 (1974), 206.

The more I analysed the networks of design promotion, the more I became involved with them. After contacting the FOC to gain access to their archives, I was commissioned for a series articles promoting the winners of the 2019 and 2020 SDA.[65] In this capacity – from the eye of the storm, as it were – I contributed in a small part to the historiography I was simultaneously analysing. This gave me insights into the porous nature of networks of promotion, which are the result of conscious decisions as much as the result of happenstance. This anecdotal evidence was confirmed in my research when I discovered the inherently "messy" nature of promotion, which comprises entangled networks. Although I was not embedded in the networks of design promotion as much as I was in the design scene, I nevertheless also benefitted from informal access to additional perspectives. I thus authored this book as a participant in the worlds of both design and design promotion. This enabled me to enrich my perspective on the SDA in ways I could not otherwise have envisaged, by providing me with a series of entry points to the SDA's politics, visual language, changes in the profession and the power balance of their networks.

65 Berthod 2019b; 2019c; Berthod *et al.* 2020a; 2020b.

1.3.4 Structure

In this chapter, I have introduced the SDA and situated their influence on the Swiss graphic design scene. I have also outlined the theoretical and methodological framework on which my book is constructed. In the next chapter, I shall retrace the arc of federal design promotion from its origins in 1917 until 2001, the year before the relaunch, to assess the role played by power struggles in defining what constitutes promotion. From the time that the SDA were founded until their reorganisation, they were governed by distinct groups with correspondingly diverse interests. These power struggles defined the politics of design promotion and contributed to the SDA relaunch in 2002.

In my third chapter, I shall examine how the SDA's reorganisation helped them to manoeuvre successfully into the new millennium. After a decade of criticism, it helped the awards to regain relevance and reposition themselves at the centre of the design scene. Furthermore, the SDA also adapted to the professional changes that were taking place in the 1990s and 2000s. I evaluate these changes and their corresponding new design languages in my fourth chapter, in which I identify how a series of technological, economic and sociological upheavals impacted on practices and led a "new school" of graphic designers. They adopted a new identity that broke with that of their predecessors. In my fifth chapter, I argue that the SDA and the new generation of designers helped each other in a process of recuperation. The awards associated themselves with the "new school" to support their agenda, which allowed the latter to take control of design promotion. These designers defined the SDA in their image, and I reveal how they used design promotion for their own devices. The awards adopted a definition of "good" design which was synonymous with self-initiated or cultural work.

In this book, I shall show how the SDA were at the nexus of power, success, recognition and the definition of good design, all of which impacted on the field of Swiss graphic design. By promoting a specific career model

located in the cultural sector, the awards contributed to redrawing the field's boundaries and became one of the defining forces on the landscape of Swiss design.