FROM COMMERCE TO CULTURE: THE ARC OF DESIGN PROMOTION 1917–2001

2.1 Conquering design promotion

2.1.1 Finding a place between art and industry

The SDA's history was shaped by a series of struggles for control going back as far as their inception. Different actors aimed to define the type of work that should be awarded, and each of these conflicts shaped design promotion. Professional associations were the first to define Swiss design promotion when they managed to procure public funding for the applied arts. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, design associations were founded internationally to promote the interests of their corresponding burgeoning professions.[1] The role of design associations, societies and councils in defining the design professions has been described in the literature.[2] They had varying agendas and different degrees of influence. Their goals included controlling the market, developing education and skills, standardising practice, promoting social mobility and gaining economic and social recognition.[3] They defined the profession's activities, structures and image, formulated codes of conduct, conferred a privileged status to their members, and generally promoted the profession.[4] Their publications and exhibitions allowed design to become visible "externally and to itself", which was an essential step in getting the profession recognised.[5] They were instrumental in defining, organising and promoting the profession and in providing designers with legitimacy. They may thus be considered the earliest "political" bodies in terms of design promotion.[6] Although not all these associations agreed with each other, they all strove to promote their discipline, whether from a social, cultural, political or economic perspective.[7] Some associations emphasised the idea of the applied arts as a craft, while others saw its future only in connection with industrial production.[8] This dichotomy led to debates and divisions which have remained unresolved ever since.[9]

1 Gnägi, Nicolai & Wohlwend Piai 2013; Woodham 1997, 165. For an overview of the literature on professions, see Dent *et al.*, 2016.
2 Armstrong 2014; Messell 2018; 2019; Yasuko 2003.
3 Armstrong 2016, 4; Larson 1977; Millerson 1998 (1964), 12.
4 Armstrong 2014; 2016; 2019; Barbieri 2017; Beegan & Atkinson 2008; Hasdoğan 2009; Lees-Maffei 2008; Messell 2019; Souza Dias 2019; Sparke 1983; Thompson 2011; Thomson 1997; Yagou 2005.
5 Millerson 1998 (1964), 12; Julier 1997.
6 Armstrong 2014, 65; 2016; Gnägi 2013, 265–266; Thomson 1997, 86–88.
7 Millerson 1998 (1964), 12; Woodham 1997, 165.

8 Woodham 1997, 165.
9 Aicher 2015 (1991), 88–89; Lees-Maffei & Sandino 2004; Schneider 2005, 35; Woodham 1997, 165–166.

The German Werkbund, which was founded in 1907, exerted a major influence on the design field in Switzerland. The Werkbund aimed to foster a closer collaboration between the arts and industry to raise the standard of applied arts and thereby improve their access to the markets.[10] Its concerns were thus intricately connected with the economy. However, its attempts at defining the profession were often met with reservations by the representatives of industry, whose reluctance was a result of a perceived incongruence between the individual artist and the "economic and technological realities of manufacturing", as well as a general distrust between artists and manufacturers.[11] The territorial negotiations between art and industry, and later between culture and commerce, would characterise the dynamics of design promotion in the 20th century.

10 Campbell 2015 (1978); Schneider 2005, 45–54; Zumstein 2013, 63.
11 Woodham 1997, 165–166.

In Switzerland, two organisations promoting the interests of design were established in 1913. The Swiss Werkbund (*Schweizerischer Werkbund*, SWB) was founded in Zurich. Its name and ideals were directly inspired by its German precursor. The SWB's aim was to improve the quality of the design field by fostering collaboration between artists, artisans and industry.[12] Six months after the SWB was set up, *L'Œuvre* (OEV)[13] was founded in Yverdon as its French-speaking counterpart.[14] Both associations lobbied for the introduction of state-funded design promotion and succeeded in this just four years later.

12 Bonnefoit 2013, 70.
13 The French name has four different meanings: the act of working, the result of work, an artwork and a charitable association. These are untranslatable and I therefore use the original term.
14 Bonnefoit 2013; Zumstein 2013, 63.

While patronage of the fine arts by the Swiss Confederation had been enshrined in law in 1887, there was nothing similar for the applied arts until 1917.[15] In 1887, the Federal Council had nominated a Federal Art Commission (FAC) that operated within the FDHA.

It was set up as an extra-parliamentary body with members appointed directly by the Federal Council and started awarding annual grants in 1899. The FDHA had initially intended to promote the applied arts through the FAC, relying on the wording of the law which in German was vague enough to allow the inclusion of so-called "decorative" or "industrial" arts.[16] The French version of the text made a clearer distinction between "arts" and "*beaux-arts*", so the FAC was not unanimous in this inclusive interpretation. Officially, this reluctance was due to limited financial means, but it also represented another territorial disagreement, this time between design and fine arts.

15 Federal Chancellery of Switzerland 1887; 1917.
16 Münch 1997, 88–89.

From 1911 onwards, the FAC argued that its budget was too small to support both applied and fine arts. Moreover, the commission often rejected practitioners from the applied arts who wanted fine arts grants,[17] which suggested that the FAC did not wish to support what they may have seen as a claim over their jurisdiction. In 1913, reacting to pressure exerted by the newly founded professional organisations, the Federal Council named three members of the SWB and OEV to sit on the FAC.[18] The presence of these professional organisations on the commission signalled state recognition of these associations, and more symbolically of the design profession in general. It was also emblematic of the successful conquest by the applied arts of a small portion of the territory of fine arts promotion.

17 Münch 1997, 89–91.
18 Münch 1997, 88; Staub 1988, 187–188.

However, the First World War soon led to a reduction in the FAC's budget.[19] As its focus was still on fine arts, the loss of financial means had a dampening effect on the promotion of design.[20] In 1917, for instance, only two of the twelve recipients of the FAC grant were graphic artists.[21] This disparity encouraged the creation of a separate entity: a commission dedicated to the applied arts. The idea was supported by the FAC, the SWB and the OEV.[22] At the end of 1917, their lobbying finally succeeded. Parliament tasked the FDHA with specifically

encouraging "applied (decorative and industrial) arts" on a federal level.[23] A new commission, the Federal Commission of the Applied Arts (FCAA), was formed within the department. The FCAA, which was renamed the Federal Design Commission (FDC) in 2002,[24] was organised on the same model as the FAC, with members appointed by the Federal Council. A separate budget was dedicated to various tools of design promotion, including the organisation of exhibitions, grants and prizes, subsidies for organisations and general financial backing to any effort supporting the applied arts.[25]

19 Jost 1988, 24.
20 Münch 1997, 89.
21 *Schweizer Kunst* 1917, 123.
22 Münch 1997, 89.
23 Federal Chancellery of Switzerland 1917. In German, "angewandte (industrielle und gewerbliche) Kunst"; in French, "art appliqués (arts décoratifs et industriels)"; and in Italian, "arte applicata (arte decorativa e industriale)".
24 Crivelli 2000d.
25 *Illustrierte Schweizerische Handwerker-Zeitung* 1917.

Both associations thus received official endorsement, and in 1918 they started receiving the federal subsidies that they had applied for in 1914.[26] Since the OEV and the SWB had played a key part in the introduction of the FCAA, they were represented on its five-member Commission. It included two members of the SWB and one from the OEV, thus securing them a majority on the Commission. Thanks to the seats they held on the FCAA until the 1960s, both associations had the upper hand in outlining and carrying out design promotion over the first half of the century.[27] As they were highly dependent on federal subsidies, they unsurprisingly argued that the Commission should prioritise the support of trade organisations before giving grants or organising competitions and exhibitions.[28] Furthermore, these two associations were already running or supervising design competitions that aimed to amplify the economic role of the applied arts.[29] These competitions were organised independently from the FCAA, which left the associations free to define their own means of promotion. This prominence that they enjoyed helped to reinforce their overall influence. Consequently, until the 1960s the SWB and the OEV played the biggest role in defining and organising the design professions and the promotion of them, both through the official channels of state promotion and through their own, private initiatives.

26 Bonnefoit 2013, 70; Zumstein 2013, 63.
27 Münch 1997, 92.
28 Münch 1997, 88–92.
29 Baudin 1997, 116–118.

2.1.2 Commerce first

Both the SWB and the OEV envisioned the applied arts as belonging to commerce rather than the cultural field. Promoting design consequently took place primarily under the banner of promoting commercial quality. While the social and cultural functions of design were also considered, they were not the principal goal of promotion.[30] The government shared the same vision for decades. In fact, the argument of economic growth had been crucial in persuading the authorities to support the applied arts in the first place. The premise was that a competitive design field would benefit the entire economy.[31] In this spirit, the FCAA organised competitions in the 1920s and 1930s with the aim of providing designers with work.[32] This philosophy persisted until the 1950s. For instance, in 1948 the SWB organised a conference on the theme of the relationship between design and the economy, and the OEV's programme between 1917 and the 1950s was intended to reinforce the economic and social role of the applied arts, with "beauty" defined primarily as "quality".[33] The associations' penchant for commercial viability was exemplified in their pre-eminent use of competitions as tools of promotion. These were organised on behalf of private and public bodies and aimed primarily at providing the winning designers with contracts and clients, as opposed to advancing the design discourse.[34] Likewise, the success of regional exhibitions and of Swiss participation in national and international exhibitions was evaluated primarily based on the number of sales and contracts concluded.[35]

30 Münch 1997, 88–90; Schilling 1997, 184.
31 Jost 1988, 19; Münch 1997, 89–91; Schilling 1997, 184.
32 Münch 1997, 92.
33 Baudin 1997, 116; Lichtenstein 2015, 21.
34 Baudin 1997, 118; Münch 1997, 100.
35 Münch 1997, 99–102.

The government shared the interest in economic promotion. In 1949, the Swiss Arts Council Pro Helvetia began promoting Swiss posters in exhibitions abroad,

in collaboration with the Swiss Office of the Development of Trade[36] and with professional associations.[37] Pro Helvetia used cultural promotion to provide Switzerland with an image in which its inhabitants would recognise themselves. It used culture as a means of national cohesion and to secure the status of the country abroad through international representation.[38] But the goal of economic promotion was also explicit. In a 1957 brochure by the FDHA presenting the best Swiss posters, the graphic arts were presented from a utilitarian perspective as "the most valid poetic expression of commerce and industry".[39] The posters displayed were commercial and touristic: they were intended to promote Swiss industry as much as graphic design itself.[40] Even in the exhibitions organised by arms of the government, economic promotion was never far from anyone's mind.

36 Known as Office Suisse d'Expansion Commerciale (OSEC), today renamed as Switzerland Global Enterprise (S-GE).
37 Kadelbach 2013, 230; Zeller 2017; 2018; 2021d.
38 For an extensive discussion of Pro Helvetia, see Hauser *et al.* 2010.
39 Kadelbach 2013, 229.
40 Kadelbach 2013, 231.

While both the SWB and the OEV were interested primarily in commercial promotion, they did not share a common definition of "good" design. In fact, they held radically different views. This was reflected in their different approaches when organising exhibitions and salons. They did so both separately and in collaboration with each other, both in Switzerland and abroad, and these were a regular source of conflict between them.[41] The influence of the German Werkbund on the SWB meant that the latter was mainly focused on industrial production and useful and durable objects, rather than on crafts.[42] While the OEV had originally been founded as a French-speaking counterpoint to the SWB, its programme nevertheless began to diverge from its model at an early date. It turned its attention towards France's model of the *artiste décorateur* and towards British Arts and Crafts, which both promoted artisanal and decorative arts.[43] These respective tendencies did not exclude localised interests – there was some interest in arts and crafts within the SWB, for example – but the overarching vision of the SWB and the OEV were in clear opposition to each other. In 1914, an attempt to create a single

national professional association failed spectacularly. It was explained by differences in the perception of the discipline in the French and German-speaking regions of Switzerland.[44] But politics also played a role, with each side accusing the other of aligning with nations on the other side of the Swiss borders.[45] Art and industry in Switzerland thus tended to follow geopolitical demarcations.

41 For further discussion concerning these exhibitions, see Münch 1997 and Baudin 1997, 120.
42 Imboden & Raschle 2013, 96; Lichtenstein 1997, 177.
43 Baudin 1997, 120–127; Bonnefoit 2013, 74–75.
44 Nicolai 2013, 53.
45 Bonnefoit 2013, 74.

The associations did not benefit from equal influence when promoting their respective views. The SWB kept the upper hand within the FCAA, notably in the role it played in organising national and international exhibitions.[46] The SWB's definition of successful design was therefore dominant and had a much greater impact on design promotion. One exhibition in particular had long-lasting repercussions for the SWB's definition. *Die gute Form,* developed by Max Bill for the SWB in 1949,[47] was unequivocal in its praise of the utilitarian – or in Bill's words, "beauty from function and as function".[48] Its success led to a series of exhibitions and prizes in the 1950s and 1960s which cemented the SWB's influence, but also gave it the role of a normative institution.[49] "Good form" had the support of the FCAA and was progressively elevated to the rank of official doctrine, which in turn led to criticism and debate.[50]

46 Münch 1997, 102.
47 *Die gute Form* has been discussed extensively in the literature. See for instance Bill 1949; 1957; Bill *et al.* 2015; Hünerwadel 2013, 286; Lichtenstein 2015, 19–20.
48 Bill 1949.
49 Hünerwadel 2013, 286–287; Lichtenstein 2015, 20.
50 Kadelbach 2013, 234.

At this point, the SWB was unequivocally the leading voice in the promotion of applied arts in Switzerland and played a critical role in defining design ideals in terms derived from industry. However, the OEV refused to adopt its counterpart's perspective, and their views on craft versus industry only became more divergent over the years.[51] This was a contributing factor to their overall loss of influence on the design scene and, by extension, on design promotion.[52]

51 Baudin 1997, 122.
52 Bonnefoit 2013, 74.

In the 1960s, the "good form" philosophy gradually lost relevance as it became regarded as too normative.[53] Emerging subcultures rejected any imposition of "ideal" taste, and the general public began to lose interest in attending *Die gute Form* exhibitions.[54] In 1968, the SWB decided to stop holding these exhibitions and began to focus instead on improving the designed environment.[55] This year may thus be considered as marking the beginning of a new orientation for the SWB in design promotion, which was henceforth focused on the social and cultural qualities of design.

53 Lichtenstein 2015, 26.
54 Hünerwadel 2013, 290.
55 "Geschäftsbericht" 1968, 2; Fünfschilling 1976b, 3; Imboden & Raschle 2013, 97.

2.1.3 Losing control of design promotion

1968 may also be considered as the year in which the primacy ended of the SWB and the OEV in federal design promotion. The Swiss Confederation now began to take an increasingly proactive stance towards the promotion of culture. In the mid-1960s, Pro Helvetia was tasked by Parliament with turning its attention abroad: only one-third of its budget was in future to be allocated to cultural promotion within Switzerland.[56] This freed up the political space necessary for embarking on a federal approach to design promotion. The FCAA began to assert its responsibility for design promotion and took over the organisation of exhibitions and competitions.[57] The last important show that was still organised by the SWB and the OEV, the Milan Triennale, was assigned to the FCAA in 1968. A national policy on culture was beginning to take shape that was independent of professional associations, though it was not yet properly articulated.

56 Milani 2010, 47.
57 Münch 1997, 106.

The SWB was dissatisfied with these developments and attempted to regain control of design policy. In 1968, it organised its annual conference under the interrogative title "*Kulturpolitik?*" (which can variously mean "cultural

policy?" or "cultural politics?"), which posed the question as to whether any such policy actually existed at a federal level.[58] The SWB invited the head of the cultural section of the Federal Political Department[59] to give the opening address as a representative of the establishment. Although he represented a "foreign affairs" approach to cultural promotion, he recognised that the situation within the country needed improvement, and explained Pro Helvetia's recent shift of focus abroad.[60] Since he was speaking as an official representative of the government, his words were welcomed as being unusually self-critical, signalling that he was willing to take into account the criticism that was being levelled at the government.[61] The public discussion that followed outlined two possible models for cultural policy, which it was felt could focus either on quantity or quality – either offering rather indiscriminate support for a large number of design practices (the so-called "watering can" approach) or engaging in a more selective series of initiatives that would reflect those instances of cultural expression that were deemed more worthy of support.[62] However, the debate failed to offer any concrete solutions or to propose the next steps that the SWB might take.[63]

58 *Glarner Nachrichten* 1968; *Schaffhauser Nachrichten* 1968.
59 Renamed the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs in 1979.
60 *Glarner Nachrichten* 1968.
61 *Die Ostschweiz* 1968; Staber 1969, 127.
62 Billeter 1968.
63 *Die Ostschweiz* 1968.

This was not lost on a self-appointed chronicler of the SWB, Margit Staber, who published a polemical article about the conference in the SWB's own journal.[64] Staber argued that the SWB was missing out on an opportunity for reform because it expected the state to define cultural promotion instead of seizing the initiative itself. In other words, the SWB was asking the Confederation to adopt a position that the association was itself unable to define. The conference, she argued, had represented a missed opportunity to take back control of design promotion. In contrast to circumstances at the beginning of the century, she claimed that the SWB had now become a passive actor of design promotion, one that simply followed the lead given by the Confederation. The arguments that she laid out in her article would be proved

correct over the ensuing decades, when professional associations lost their influence, and the Confederation took over design promotion.

64 Staber 1969.

2.2 Federal control

2.2.1 A distant patron

Due to Switzerland's decentralised political system, the involvement of the Confederation in cultural policy has historically been limited.[65] Even today, federalism leaves a major part of that responsibility to the cities and cantons, and the same applies to funding.[66] For example, there is no national museum of fine arts and no national theatre. After the creation of the Swiss federal state in 1848, the Confederation intermittently supported projects of national importance,[67] but stopped short of formulating any overarching strategy. The first office linked with cultural promotion – the Federal Office for the Conservation of Historic Monuments – was founded in 1886. It was followed shortly afterwards by laws for the promotion of fine arts in 1887 and for the promotion of applied arts in 1917.[68] But the first national stance on cultural promotion was formulated in the 1930s, when the threat of neighbouring authoritarian regimes led to the birth of "spiritual national defence", an "official" definition of Swiss culture in 1938,[69] and the foundation of Pro Helvetia (as a working group) in 1939.[70] Even so, the Confederation was reluctant to get too involved, fearing that it might thereby define a "state culture" that would go against the principle of federalism. This arm's-length approach was apparent when Pro Helvetia was set up as a public law foundation that was independent from the government, and in the expectation that it should not take the initiative in terms of cultural promotion but limit itself to responding to subsidy requests.[71]

65 For a historical overview of Swiss cultural policy, see Keller 2010; 2017.
66 Swiss Federal Office of Statistic n.d.
67 Such as the Swiss Federal Archives (1848), the National Museum (1890) and the Swiss National Library (1894).
68 Weckerle & Theler 2018, 3.
69 Delivered in the form of a message to parliament by the head of the FDHA, Philipp Etter. Milani 2010, 39–40.
70 Pro Helvetia was transformed into a public-law foundation in 1949. Milani 2010. On spiritual national defence, see Mohler 2018; Mooser 1997.
71 Milani 2010, 41–43.

It was only from the late 1960s onwards that culture became an object of public discussion, thanks notably to a new generation of artists and intellectuals who called for forms of culture that were more participatory, who wanted more freedom in what they created, and who also argued for support from the state.[72] This culture debate was one of several contributory factors in the students' revolt of May 1968. In 1969, the government responded to the growing conversation about federal cultural policy by appointing a group of experts to what became known as the Clottu Commission.[73] It was instructed by the FDHA to review the cultural status quo, map out the needs of the arts, give an opinion on current cultural policy, and suggest measures to be taken by the three levels of government (the municipal authorities, the cantons and the Confederation). The voluminous report that the Commission published in 1975 was the first-ever official document to engage in large-scale reflection on the role of government in the field of culture, which had so far been the responsibility of the cities and cantons.[74]

72 Milani 2010, 48; Weckerle & Theler 2018, 3.
73 Milani 2010, 49.
74 Clottu 1975.

The Clottu Report advised making a series of changes to cultural policy. Some recommendations for design promotion were modest, such as new rules for selecting the members of the FCAA and the publication of an annual report to achieve greater transparency about its activities.[75] Others were more radical and displayed a shift in attitudes towards art and design. The Commission argued that the border between the two disciplines was irrelevant, and so the FAC and the FCAA should either be merged into a single organ for the promotion of "all forms of expression in the field of plastic arts", or at least made to collaborate more closely.[76] Instead of being part of the FDHA, they should come under the umbrella of Pro Helvetia, who would have a say in nominating the members of the commissions.[77] More importantly, the report argued that Pro Helvetia – which was to be renamed the "Swiss Foundation for Culture" – should become the overarching framework for all forms of federal cultural promotion.[78]

75 Clottu 1975, 131–132.
76 Clottu 1975, 403.
77 Clottu 1975, 403–404.
78 Clottu 1975, 382, 394, 398–399.

Most of these recommendations remained at the proposal stage. But this Report nevertheless succeeded in launching a national debate about the role of culture.[79] A journalist noted that this relatively "dry topic" had now become a "burning issue".[80] Some representatives of the press welcomed the report,[81] while others argued that everything overly critical had been edited out.[82] There was even a heated debate in the daily newspaper *Tages-Anzeiger* over the course of several months.[83] The SWB also followed the report closely. In December 1976, it organised a conference to discuss the issues raised in the report, entitled: *Kultur – Kulturförderung – Kulturpolitik* ("Culture – cultural promotion – cultural policy"), with speakers from the SWB and nine representatives from a wide range of fields including sociology, architecture, politics and art history. The SWB disputed the definition of "culture" outlined in the Clottu report, arguing that it was narrow, elitist and excluded the applied arts.[84] Instead, it proposed a much more comprehensive definition.[85] The position of the SWB in the debate showed how radically its position had shifted from earlier years. Cultural policies and design promotion were presented by the SWB as socio-cultural priorities.[86] The links to the economy that had once been paramount had now all but disappeared. However, this shift in attitude would prove insufficient for the SWB to retain control of design promotion.

79 Keller 2010; Milani 2010, 52.
80 Burri 1976.
81 Galland 1976; Perrin 1976.
82 Billeter 1976; Lienhard 1976.
83 Altorfer 1976; Billeter 1976; Lienhard 1976; Vogt 1976.
84 Fünfschilling 1976b, 1; 1976c, 1; Huber 1976; *Schweizerischer Werkbund* 1977, 3.
85 "Als Kultur bezeichnen wir die gesamte auf den Menschen wirkende Umwelt, die eine Gesellschaft in allen Bereichen ihrer Aktivität produziert und produzierte". *Schweizerischer Werkbund* 1977, 3.
86 Fünfschilling 1976a, 3.

2.2.2 The emergence of a federal strategy

Before the Clottu Commission had even published its report, the FDHA increased its influence in the field of design promotion. It became the patron of the Most Beautiful Swiss Books competition (MBSB) in 1972.

This competition had been organised since 1943 by trade organisations – first by the Swiss Union of Booksellers, then by its successor the Swiss Association of Booksellers and Publishers – and had gained a following in the industry even though it neither awarded money nor had any concrete commercial impact.[87] In 1972, the MBSB competition was reorganised according to new regulations set up by the FDHA. The government appointed the jury, conferred the award, and assumed responsibility for publishing and distributing the catalogue.[88] While this restructuring did not completely annul the power of the professional associations who still sat on the jury, the FDHA increased its control by setting the rules and funding the competition. Design promotion was slowly moving out of private and commercial hands to become instead a matter for the federal government.

87 Früh 2004, 122; Guggenheimer 2004, 82; Münch 1997, 92–106.
88 Früh 2004; Tschudi 1972.

The public sector's growing involvement in cultural promotion led to greater involvement on the part of the FCAA and the federal administration.[89] This increased workload was a contributing factor in the creation of a dedicated body for culture in 1973, the Federal Office of Cultural Affairs.[90] The government ignored the Clottu report's recommendation to use Pro Helvetia as the overarching organ for cultural promotion. The opposite now actually occurred: the Office soon took over some of Pro Helvetia's responsibilities.[91] I can only speculate as to whether the creation of an Office within the Department of Home Affairs was due to a penchant for pragmatic political continuity or to a desire to maintain control over cultural affairs. From this moment onwards, however, Pro Helvetia's involvement in design promotion was practically non-existent until the first law on the promotion of culture was passed in 2009.[92]

89 Münch 1997, 107.
90 Dodis n.d.
91 Rüegg 2010, 176–177.
92 Federal Chancellery of Switzerland 2009; 2011.

In 1978, the Federal Office of Cultural Affairs was renamed the Federal Office of Culture (FOC). It remains the Swiss Confederation's primary organ of support for the applied arts today. The foundation of the Federal

Office of Cultural Affairs in 1975 can thus be considered as the symbolic beginning of a coordinated strategy for cultural policy on the part of the Swiss government. Design promotion was included in cultural affairs, and although the role of cultural promotion in the economy was not completely ignored, it would no longer be the government's main preoccupation.[93]

93 Dreifuss 1997.

At the end of the 1980s, the SWB still saw itself as at the centre of design promotion, though the reality was quite different.[94] The FOC had become the leading voice in the promotion of design, and it was too late for the SWB to regain control. The influence of professional associations diminished as the FDHA's involvement intensified. Furthermore, their relevance as professional bodies was beginning to fade. 1989 marked the peak in the growth of the general body of the SWB, which had grown uninterruptedly since 1913.[95] The association underwent an uninterrupted decline thereafter. Moreover, graphic designers had already begun leaving the SWB by 1989. They had numbered 369 in 1964, but only 232 in 1989. This decline continued, and in 2012 only 141 graphic designers were members of the SWB – which constitutes more than a 60% drop in membership compared to 1964. The SWB had already lost relevance to graphic designers. The increased role that the FOC played in design promotion also led to the creation of two distinct services within the Office in 1992, one dedicated to fine arts and the other to design.[96] Nevertheless, the strengthened federal voice did not convince everyone, nor did it reduce the ongoing territorial conflicts in design promotion. Design competitions in particular were sites of conflict whose borders were hotly disputed. Professional associations had come to understand design as a cultural asset, though the industry continued to uphold its commercial aims. Design competitions were thus being pulled in these two different directions. These conflicts became so intense that they became impossible to resolve: the situation had reached a dead end that would only lead to a further fragmentation of the field.

94 U. Graf 1991.
95 Gnägi, Nicolai & Wohlwend Piai 2013, 445.
96 Crivelli & Imboden 1997, 86.

2.2.3 Questioning promotion

In the 1990s, the SWB's response to the FOC's tight grip on design promotion was to fight back via an issue of its journal *SWB-Dokument* that was entitled "The design competition: cultural instrument, trendsetter or alibi?" and pointed out what it saw as the problems with design competitions:

Incomprehensible award decisions, woolly worded jury reports, no clear distinction between moral and aesthetic value judgments, and a general, habitual refusal on the part of the assessing bodies to disclose their own standpoint [...].[97]

97 "Der Gestaltungswettbewerb: Kulturinstrument, Modemacher Oder Alibi?" Fünfschilling 1991; "Unverständliche Auszeichnungen, schwammig formulierte Juryberichte, keine klare Unterscheidung moralischer und ästhetischer Werturteile und überhaupt der weitherum übliche Verzicht der beurteilenden Gremien auf Offenlegung ihrer Werthaltungen [...]." Fünfschilling & Heller 1991a, 5.

The SWB argued that the various promotional tools of the FOC – such as the MBSB, the SDA and the Swiss Poster competition – were in dire need of reform. They argued that design promotion was still using the problematic model of "good form" – "*gute Form*" – and as a result, arbitrary judgements were being made, with the reasoning behind them being based on normative ideas that failed to recognise the value of each case on its own, independent merits.[98] Competitions were incompatible with the SWB's vision of the discipline, and those in charge of the SWB were convinced that it was their vision alone that should determine design promotion.

98 Fünfschilling & Heller 1991b.

Another criticism made of competitions was that the manufacturing industry was given too much leeway in them. Castigating the MBSB competition especially, the SWB reproached it for its focus on the market and on industry. Instead of being design-oriented, claimed the SWB, it was too focused on promoting the profession, on providing business opportunities or supporting sectors of the industry. This was supposedly because the majority

of the jury of the MBSB was composed of representatives from the book industry, such as publishers, bookbinders, paper manufacturers, printers and booksellers.[99] In the 1980s, the jury comprised between 13 and 15 people, but only four of them were not linked to the industry: these were one delegate each from the SWB, the OEV, the FDHA and the *Schweizerische Bibliophilen-Gesellschaft* (the Swiss association of bibliophiles). This imbalance on the jury inevitably led delegates to promote books that their own industries had produced, published or were selling, instead of awarding more daring publications that might have promoted design innovation.[100] This not only favoured those entrants that adhered more to tradition, but also served to ensure that innovative approaches and less experienced designers had less of a chance of success.[101]

99 The following trade associations were present on the jury of the MBSB between 1949 and 1996: the Association of Swiss publishers (VSV), its successor the Swiss association of booksellers and publishers (SBVV), the Association of booksellers and publishers of French-speaking Switzerland (SLESR), the Association of publishers of Italian-speaking Switzerland (SESI), the SWB, the Swiss Graphic Arts Union (SGG), the Union of Bookbindery Owners (VBS), the Book and Paper Union (GDP, former STB), and the Association of the Swiss Printing Industry (SBV). Guggenheimer 2004, 81–82.

100 Tschopp 1991, 23.

101 R. Graf 1991.

It is hardly surprising that representatives of the book trade took a contrary view of things. They felt that the FOC's awards were too close to "culture" and were not doing enough to promote commercial practices. This sense of dissatisfaction resulted in the creation of an independent biennial prize with a strong focus on the industry, the *Design Preis Schweiz* (Design Prize Switzerland), which was founded in 1991 and only awards artefacts which are available on the market.[102] Another competition, the Swiss Posters of the Year, became a tug-of-war between the worlds of industry and culture. The 1991 issue of *SWB-Dokument* pointed out the lack of enthusiasm for the competition on the part of the SWB's members. The Swiss Posters of the Year competition was organised under the patronage of the FOC by Switzerland's main advertising company, the *Allgemeine Plakatgesellschaft|Société Générale d'Affichage* (General Poster Company APG|SGA). Again, representatives of the industry made up a large portion of the jury,[103] and their definition of a good poster was very different from the ideas of the SWB, which proceeded to question the

integrity of the jury members, claiming that they seemed to be promoting their own interests at the expense of good design.[104] The SWB identified several issues here: the absence of women on the jury, which contributed to sexist imagery; the exclusion of political posters; the omission of any discussion on ecological matters; a lack of transparency in jury decisions; and, finally, they identified a divergence in the treatment of advertising posters and cultural posters, whose purpose and language were completely different.[105] The SWB therefore suggested dividing the competition into two distinct categories, cultural and advertising.[106] While this call remained unanswered, it represented another example of the divergence between the commercial and cultural definitions of what constituted "good design". It also reinforced the idea that cultural design was a special case that should be supported on its own terms.

102 Design Preis Schweiz n.d. It was founded by the Design Center Langenthal AG. Over the years, it was supported by private and public sponsors including the FOC, Swisslos, Swiss Textiles, SECO and the cantons Bern, Solothurn and Zurich.

103 The nine-person jury was composed as follows: a member of the FDHA; four members of professional associations – the SWB, the OEV, the Association of Swiss Graphic Designers (ASG) and the *Alliance Graphique Internationale* (AGI); three delegates of the advertising branch – the Swiss advertising association (SRV), the French-speaking Switzerland Advertising Federation (FRP), the Swiss Advertisement Federation (BSR); and one delegate from the APG|SGA. U. Graf 1991, 29.

104 U. Graf 1991, 29–31.

105 Fanger 1991, 31.

106 U. Graf 1991, 32.

These criticisms of the design competitions did not stop the FOC, which continued its takeover of them. In 1997, it gained control of the MBSB. Until now, these awards had considered all aspects of book production, but the FOC declared that the design of books should henceforth take precedence over the technical aspects of their manufacture.[107] The success of their takeover may have been helped by the fact that the awards did not have much of an impact on book sales, but mainly benefitted printers, typesetters, bookbinders and design studios.[108] The composition of the jury was also changed, with the members of trade organisations now losing their seats. This transition to a new order was completed in 1999 when the role of secretary – held since the early days of the competition by a member of the *Schweizerischer Buchhändler- und Verleger-Verband* (Swiss association of booksellers and publishers, SBVV) – was taken over by the FOC.[109] Over two years, the FOC had completely side-lined the professional associations, whose role was

now downgraded to being patrons of the competition.[110] As a further blow, subsidies from the FOC for the SWB were reduced in 1997, and ceased altogether in 2010.[111] The OEV's influence diminishing, it was finally dissolved in 2003.[112] Far from trying to bridge the gap between organisations and state promotion, the FOC had distanced itself from the influence of professional associations and become the undisputed leader in design promotion.

107 Früh 2004; Guggenheimer 2004, 83. Since the MBSB competition awards books in the year after their publication, this affected the jury of the 1996 edition.
108 Guggenheimer 2004, 82.
109 Früh 2004.
110 Fischer 2000, 42.
111 Imboden 2016.
112 Bonnefoit 2013, 82.

There was one exception to this takeover: the Swiss Poster of the Year. In the early 2000s, the tensions between the cultural and commercial sectors became so strong that the APG|SGA rescinded its 61-year-old collaboration with the FOC on the competition. It argued that cultural posters were being privileged over the advertising sector, while the FOC insisted that posters had to be judged primarily from a design perspective.[113] Naturally, privileging the advertising sector was in the APG|SGA's interests. Due to a lack of resources and a lack of consensus on the FCAA, the FOC was unable to take over the competition as it had done with the MBSB. Instead, it let go of its share of control over the competition.[114] The APG|SGA took ownership of it, and still organises it today. The competition shifted its focus to advertising, which brought about a change in the type of work that was submitted, and in the awards' target audience. The split between cultural and commercial designers was never bridged. Today, this poster award is primarily a matter of interest to those in the advertising sector. Designers who work more in the cultural sector either focused their interest on other poster competitions, such as the *100 Beste Plakate* (100 Best Posters), which from 2001 onwards accepted all German-language posters,[115] or even organised their own, such as the Weltformat Festival that has taken place since 2009 and organises a poster competition.[116]

113 Coen 2005; Crivelli 2004a; Gerdil-Margueron 2002.
114 Crivelli 2004a; 2017.

115 In 1966, the competition was founded in Germany as *Die besten Plakate des Jahres*. In 2001, it changed its name and began including all German-language posters, effectively integrating Austria and German-speaking Switzerland.

116 This poster festival was founded in Lucerne in 2009 by the Posters Lucerne association. Since 2018, it has expanded to include a graphic design festival (Richter 2017).

2.3 A path to reform

2.3.1 The reappraisal of competitions[117]

By the early 2000s, the FDHA had completed its takeover of design promotion, the only exception – as stated above – being the poster competition. Professional organisations were left entirely out of the equation. In less than a century, their relevance had faded so much that they were no longer deemed significant enough to sit around the table of design promotion. Unsurprisingly, the FOC's takeover did not proceed without creating dissent. However, the scale of the criticism of the competitions in the 1990s was such that we can assume other factors were involved. It is thus essential for us to examine the broader context of design promotion in the 1980s and 1990s. The debate about cultural policy that had begun in the late 1960s and early 1970s was still having an impact. The validity of existing cultural hierarchies continued to be questioned, and design competitions were part of that debate.

117 A selection of findings from this section were published in Berthod 2018a.

A series of exhibitions curated by Martin Heller at the MfGZ were an indicator of that trend and rejected any dogmatic understanding of "good design". Instead, they proposed a definition of design that encompassed a broader interpretation of visual culture and put an emphasis on design as a socio-cultural phenomenon.[118] For example, Heller organised exhibitions on everyday graphic design and popular design,[119] and in other exhibitions also revisited previous design competitions. One moved its focus away from the award-winning posters to include those that had been rejected by the jury, while another took the form of an inverted award where the worst posters were exhibited.[120] In these exhibitions, the "stylistic authority" previously attributed to design competitions was questioned, as was the notion of good taste. The exhibition of the worst posters created a scandal. It was rejected by designers, and their

criticisms reached the mainstream press, where the exhibition was widely condemned.[121] All the same, this exhibition and the others organised by Heller reflected a general tendency to subject design competitions to a critical reappraisal.

118 Lzicar 2021.

119 *Herzblut: Populäre Gestaltung aus der Schweiz* (Lifeblood: Popular design from Switzerland), Museum für Gestaltung Zürich, 2.9.1987–8.11.1987); *Anschläge: Plakatsprache Zürich 1978–1988* ([Anschläge]: Poster language [in] Zurich 1978–1988), Museum für Gestaltung Zurich, 31.8.1988–23.10.1988. Lzicar 2021. "Anschlag" is a play on words; it can mean various things, including a poster and an attack.

120 *50 Jahre Schweizerische Winterhilfe* (50 Years of Swiss Winter Aid), Museum für Gestaltung Zürich, 25.10.1986–7.12.1986; *Die 99 schlechtesten Plakate – prämiert weil jenseits* (The 99 worst posters – awarded because beyond [discussion]), Museum für Gestaltung Zürich, 23.11.1994–15.1.1995.

121 Lzicar 2021; Zeller 2021a.

The waning number of designers applying to participate in the SDA suggests that interest in competitions was itself dwindling. It is difficult to determine any clear tendencies, because the number of applications in any case varied vastly from one year to the next. But there was undoubtedly a downward trend from 1983 onwards (Fig. 2.1). That year marked a peak, which was followed by a reduction in submissions until the early 1990s. Even if we take into consideration the natural fluctuations in submission numbers, the situation in 1991 was clearly extreme, for this year marked the lowest number of applicants since 1969. Already in 1989, the FOC had attempted to address this decline by introducing a new exhibition system to promote the awards among designers and to increase the visibility of the discipline among the public.

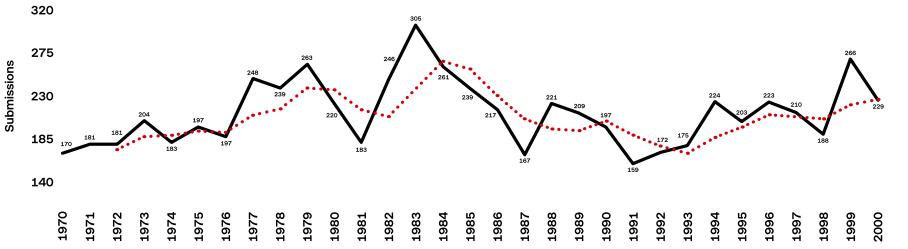

Fig. 2.1 Number of submissions to the SDA across all categories, between 1970 and 2000. The black line plots the total number of submissions. The dotted line is a three-year average. See table 7.1.

Prior to 1989, the FOC had organised simple exhibitions at the Kornhaus in Bern for all the designers who reached the second round of the competition. Before this exhibition opened, the jury would assess the designers'

submissions and hand out the final awards. This exhibition of both winners and nominees would then be opened to the public, though its reach remained limited. In 1989, the FOC introduced a new strategy. For the first time, the exhibition travelled outside Bern after the jury had made its decisions. It was hosted by the Musée des Arts Décoratifs in Lausanne (now mudac). The exhibition thereafter travelled to a different location every year until 2000, covering all the linguistic regions of Switzerland. It was shown in the design institutions one would expect (namely the applied art museums in Lausanne, Zurich and Basel),[122] but was also shown at applied art schools (Geneva and Lucerne), exhibition halls and museums (in Lugano, Geneva, Bienne and Locarno) and cultural centres (Bern). The FOC was now reaching out to a design audience that was as broad as possible.

122 The Museum für Gestaltung Basel was closed shortly afterwards, in 1996.

In another first, the 1989 exhibition was accompanied by a catalogue (see Fig. 2.2 and Fig. 3.16). This publication became an annual tradition that lasted until 2011.[123] As the texts of the catalogue made clear, this new initiative was an attempt to increase the public's awareness of design, foster a dialogue between designers and manufacturers, report on the latest trends and – last but not least – encourage more designers to submit work to the competition. The president of the FCAA, Andreas Christen, attributed the downward trend in applications to the insufficient visibility of the SDA in the professional world, and to an ambiguity about what type of design would be awarded prizes.[124] He suggested that designers associated the SDA with "decorative arts" and crafts, although the competition also welcomed serially produced projects. The name of the competition also needed to be updated in line with recent changes in the names of the design schools. These had dropped *angewandte Künste* and *arts décoratifs*, which suggested a link with crafts, and instead began using *Gestaltung* and *arts appliqués*. Christen suggested changing the official description of the competition (*Stipendium* and *bourse*) to replace "bursary" with "prize", which was more accurate. To further persuade designers to submit their work, the catalogues in the years 1989 to 1992 all included a list

of famous previous winners of the SDA. As scholars have argued, awards garner respect by showing how successful previous winners have become.[125] By signalling that the awards really had gone to the absolute best designers, the SDA were also attempting to place the competition in a more positive light.

123 Except for 2001, when the FOC was too busy preparing the 2002 relaunch to publish a catalogue.
124 Lippuner & Buxcel 1989, n.p.
125 Frey 2006, 380–385.

Judging by the trend in applications, this strategy had no clear effect in the five years after its implementation (Fig. 2.1). Perhaps designers were still in two minds about the awards. They may also have displayed what Bourdieu called "strategies of condescension".[126] People rarely want to appear to compete for the opinion of others and thus they pretend to remain indifferent to awards, regardless of how involved these designers may actually have been as nominees, winners or even jury members.[127] For example, Cornel Windlin made a dismissive response to his win in 1995; I shall discuss this in greater detail in chapter four (see Fig. 4.1). This apparent condescension showed that designers no longer wanted to be associated with awards that did not represent their version of the profession. Windlin further distanced himself from the SDA in 1997–1999 with a series of posters commissioned by the FOC that read like a thinly veiled criticism of the competition (Fig. 2.3).

126 Bourdieu 1991a, 68–69; 2016 (1992), n. p., part 1, ch. 3.
127 English 2005, 212; 2014, 121–124 and 133–134.

Fig. 2.2 The first SDA catalogue. Design: Atelier Jeker (Sandra Binder), 1989.

These posters featured a series of unpolished snapshots by Isabel Truniger showing display cases in Zurich that were a common sight outside businesses in the city at the time, ranging from traditional cuckoo-clock shops to strip bars. Windlin's choice of typefaces and colours also riffed on the kitsch and the vernacular. The implied analogy between the SDA and these rough-and-ready display cases was obvious.[128] Windlin's posters echoed the second round of the competition, in which designers displayed their wares to the jury in the hope of winning an award; they not only exposed these modes of presentation but could also imply that the actual exhibition was out of touch with the latest trends. The use of disused vitrines implied a provincial competition, quaint but inevitably out of fashion. Windlin explained it was a critical comment on the move towards "a more show-oriented presentation mode": "I had proposed this after the [FOC] changed their mode of how contenders were asked to present their work, in a shift away from sober, factual presentation to more elaborate ways, focussing on the aspect of 'show' and 'entertainment'."[129]

128 Settele 1997.
129 Cornel Windlin, email correspondence with the present writer, 4 July 2023.

Fig. 2.3 Poster for the 1998 SDA exhibition in Basel (1998). Design: Cornel Windlin.
Fig. 2.4 Rejected poster for the 1997 SDA exhibition in Basel (1997). Design: Cornel Windlin.

In one rejected version of the poster reaching new heights in its strategy of condescension, Windlin used a photograph of a display case advertising strippers (Fig. 2.4). Here, surely even a passer-by would have seen the satirical analogy between design awards and prostitution. As the poster was being sent to print, the Federal Councillor Ruth Dreyfuss intervened, fearing a scandal in the press.

Windlin recalled, "there were discussions whether the motif was sexist, and possibly racist, which offended me. I felt it was making use of certain mechanisms, visible to anyone every day, by transposing them to another field, placing entirely out of context, hence inviting debate and discussion."[130] While it may at first sight seem surprising that the FOC's Design Service would have commissioned and agreed to posters implying a critique of the institution, these also offer us insights into the way the institution wanted to be perceived. To become more attractive to up-and-coming designers, it was willing to use self-derision and humour. This knowing type of design language became a defining feature of the 2002 reorganisation of the SDA.

130 *Ibid.*

2.3.2 Critiques, reflection and redefinition

According to the specialised press, the SDA could not go on as they had. In the 1990s, *Hochparterre*, the leading architecture and design magazine in Switzerland, featured several censorious articles on the awards. The criticisms were multifaceted and questioned every aspect of the awards. Echoing earlier reproaches made by the SWB, *Hochparterre* deemed the judging process to be overly opaque. It asked for transparency on the jury's criteria, or at least for access to the reasoning behind its verdict.[131] The magazine pointed out that the jury did not support enough experimental or critical practices.[132] It also called for the creation of new categories[133] to include recently developed domains such as interface design or service design.[134] *Hochparterre* also deplored the scarce number of prizes going to experimental projects.[135] Instead, it argued, the jury was unadventurous and only awarded "safe" projects by established designers, many of whom had previously already won.[136] In other words, *Hochparterre* believed that the SDA were simply too conservative.

131 Gantenbein 1992; 1994; Müller 1992.
132 Müller 1992.
133 The categories in the 1990s were industrial and interior design, graphic design, photography, theatre design, textile design and fashion, jewellery and instruments, and ceramics.
134 Gantenbein 1995.
135 Müller 1992.
136 Gantenbein 1992; 1994.

The criticism peaked in 1996. *Hochparterre* claimed that the SDA's relevance was over and called for a reset. Arguing that the "right" type of applicants were no longer presenting their work, it claimed that the SDA were nothing more than a random selection of projects.[137] It suggested dissolving the SDA into a series of independent competitions split by discipline, which would allow a more diverse range of practices to be represented including media design and projects blurring the line between design and art.[138] The designers interviewed by *Hochparterre* still welcomed the SDA's cash prize, but they also pointed out that the competition suffered from a low public profile that was detrimental to establishing the professional connections that they really needed.[139] They also asked for a catalogue that was more representative of their work, and floated the idea of introducing an alternative to the cash prize in the form of further training abroad.

137 Locher 1996.
138 *Ibid.*
139 Michel 2000a, 27.

The FOC was aware of the issues raised by *Hochparterre*. It initially did not rebut the criticism, but instead blamed the random nature of its open calls for submissions and the lack of challenges in Switzerland that led designers to rely on well-known tropes (such as "Swiss quality") instead of daring to engage in the kind of experimental practices that were current in other countries.[140] As the criticism intensified, the FOC no longer took position officially, but it ended up following some of *Hochparterre*'s recommendations in the 2002 reorganisation of the SDA. In the late 1990s, however, the FOC was focusing on the upcoming jubilee of federal design promotion. This commemoration offered the perfect opportunity to display design promotion under a more positive light.

140 FOC 1993.

In 1997, the FOC celebrated 80 years of design promotion in Switzerland by organising *Made in Switzerland*, which took the form of an exhibition in Lausanne accompanied by an extensive publication.[141] This anniversary provided the opportunity for the FOC's design department not only to celebrate, but also to rethink the awards.[142]

According to Patrizia Crivelli, the secretary of the design department between 1994 and 2017, it "was time to open up new areas of reflection in order to find other paths in the domain of the promotion of creation".[143] In 1997, the FCAA emphasised the importance of the SDA for design promotion, thereby signalling its disagreement with the radical proposals that had been published in the press.[144] Nevertheless, the criticism had been noted. The FCAA recognised certain weaknesses in the competition and the FOC, arguing that both needed a new image if they were to regain their former position on the scene and a greater presence in the vocational training schools (*Schulen für Gestaltung*).

141 The exhibition was split across two locations: ECAL (29.11.1997–23.12.1997) and the Musée des arts décoratifs (now mudac, 29.11.1997–4.1.1998).
142 Crivelli *et al.* 1997; Crivelli & Imboden 1997, 86; FOC 1999a.
143 "Il était temps d'ouvrir de nouveaux champs de réflexion pour trouver d'autres voies dans le domaine de l'encouragement de la création." Crivelli 1999a.
144 Crivelli 1998b; 1998c.

The anniversary triggered a five-year-long discussion on a rehaul of the competition to make it relevant for a new generation of designers. The FCAA also heard the specialised press. The commission invited Köbi Gantenbein and Adalbert Locher, who had penned most of the critical *Hochparterre* articles, to contribute to the 1997 catalogue. The duo played a significant part in the restructuring process.[145] Nevertheless, in the early 2000s, the specialist press continued to put pressure on the SDA. It revisited the old arguments that the awards' categories were out of touch with a profession in which disciplinary boundaries were increasingly blurred and claimed that the awards lacked public recognition.[146] The SDA's critics were adamant that the current setup could not continue.[147]

145 Berthod 2018a.
146 Michel 2000a.
147 *Kult* 2002.

At the end of the 1990s, as part of her continuing education, Patrizia Crivelli was also undertaking a Master in the management of non-profit organisations at the University of Fribourg. She took the opportunity offered by her thesis to analyse the Swiss design scene, and set out to correct the SDA's problems.[148] She sent out a survey and held discussions with numerous Swiss designers, teachers at art and design colleges, museum

curators and former prize-winners who had succesfully entered the industrial production sector.[149] Crivelli opened up every aspect of the competition to possible critique, and her questions left no stone unturned:

What is the purpose of the competition? What are the needs of designers today? Does this promotional measure still make sense today? What reputation does the competition enjoy among designers and among institutions and museums concerned with design? What benefits do the prize-winners derive from the competition? Does the division into individual categories still make sense? Do cash prizes make sense? Does this amount of money help designers to realise their projects? Does the prize have an advertising effect for the winners? Is it essential for their future career?[150]

148 Crivelli 2017.
149 Crivelli n.d. [2002?].
150 "Was soll der Wettbewerb bewirken? Welches sind die Bedürfnisse der Designerinnen und Designern heute? Macht diese Fördermassnahme heute noch Sinn? Welches Ansehen geniesst der Wettbewerb bei den Designerinnen und Designer und bei den Institutionen und Museen, die sich mit Design befassen? Welchen Nutzen ziehen die Preisträgerinnen und Preisträger aus dem Wettbewerb? Macht die Einteilung in einzelne Bereiche noch Sinn? Machen Geldpreise Sinn? Hilft dieser Geldbetrag den Designerinnen und Designern bei der Verwirklichung ihrer Projekte? Hat der Preis eine Werbewirkung für die Gewinnerinnen und die Gewinner? Ist er wesentlich für ihre weitere Karriere?" Crivelli n.d. [2002?].

By working in close collaboration with the FCAA and its experts, she identified a series of opportunities for developing a new model of design promotion. Although most texts on the subject were penned by Crivelli, this was a collective effort involving many actors. While her views aligned with those of the FCAA without whose support she would have been powerless, her role as secretary of the Design Service meant that she became the *de facto* public voice advocating for change.

Crivelli expressed concerns publicly in the competition's catalogue of 1999. She advocated for the monetary prize

to remain while calling it to be assorted with other forms of support.[151] Her research had demonstrated the difficulties encountered by young designers in establishing contacts with the economic sector, manufacturers and investors.[152] To address this, she recommended a new responsibility for the FOC, which ought to become an "intermediary between [designers] and industry, museums or any institution ready to realise a project with them".[153] The proposed emphasis on the FOC as a mediator became a defining feature of the reorganisation of the SDA in 2002.

151 Crivelli 1999a.
152 Berthod 2018a.
153 Crivelli 1999a.

After finishing her thesis, Crivelli turned it into a report to convince the head of the FOC that a reorganisation of the awards was necessary.[154] The FCAA then commissioned Ralf Michel and Ruedi Alexander Müller to come up with a new concept.[155] Michel was a member of the Swiss Design Association and had worked as a design editor at *Hochparterre*, while Müller was the CEO of the Zurich-based agency Nose Design. Their new concept was approved in a revamped form after a one-day workshop with the Commission in May 2000.[156] As the minutes of the meeting concluded, "the party [could] begin".[157] By December 2000, the final details were ready.[158] It was also that year that the FCAA decided to change its name to reflect the term commonly used by practitioners. From 2002, it would be known as the Federal Design Commission (FDC).[159] The FOC's ideas were accepted by Parliament, which granted an increase in funding for design promotion in 2001, going from CHF 1.2 to CHF 2 million.[160] Everything was now ready for the relaunch: a clear strategy, a broad consensus, the political will, and an increased budget.

154 Crivelli 2017.
155 Crivelli 2000a.
156 Crivelli 2000b.
157 *Ibid.*
158 Crivelli 2000f.
159 Crivelli 2000d.
160 Locher 2002, 19.

In 2000, perhaps hinting at the process of reflection that had begun behind the scenes, the poster and invitation to the awards showed a freshly ploughed field with signs

of new growth (Fig. 2.5). If I may be allowed to extend the farming metaphor, 2001 was a fallow year. The FOC did award 16 projects that year (along with their 24 designers), but design promotion was reduced to a bare minimum. The scope of the 2002 reorganisation and the pressure accompanying the relaunch were so great that the 2001 edition of the SDA was kept to a minimum. Though the awards did take place, for the first time since 1989 the SDA exhibition remained confined to the second round and was organised in Basel primarily for the jury. It did not travel to any institution and was not accompanied by a catalogue. While participants felt neglected, the Design Service's means were too limited for them to be able to organise the regular publication and travelling exhibition while at the same time preparing the competition's new format.[161]

161 Benedetto 2019; Crivelli 2001; 2017.

Fig. 2.5 Invitation to the 2000 SDA ceremony (2000). Design and photograph: Gilles and Vincent Turin.

As a result, the 2001 edition was almost erased from the memory.[162] Little visual material remains of it. For instance, the MfGZ has no artefacts for that year, not even a poster.[163] The absence of published material for 2001 can be felt down to the present day. The discontinued website "swissdesignawards.ch", which was used as the main platform and archive for design promotion from 2010 until early 2019, had no information for 2001. The new website – "schweizerkulturpreise.ch" – also skips 2001 at the time of writing.[164] This gap underlines the role played by the SDA's visual communication as a record of a year's work and discourse. Whenever visual material was produced for the awards, it had an immediate effect on promotion, the archive and memory. Its absence thus induced long-term amnesia.

162 Crivelli 2017.
163 I was not even able to locate a single photograph of the exhibition in the FOC's internal archives.
164 Accessed 20 March 2021.

2.3.3 The arc of design promotion

When the SWB and the OEV successfully lobbied the government to promote design in 1917, they simultaneously began playing a defining role in that same process of promotion. They secured funding for their activities and acquired recognition for their discipline. Both the professional organisations and the government shared a vision for design promotion whose goal was to support the economy rather than society or culture. Over the course of the next century, this perception evolved. The debate on cultural policy led to a new definition of the role of design. The state and the SWB began promoting the discipline in the understanding that it also contributed to society and culture. By the end of the 20th century, the FOC had moved away from supporting commerce. The arc of design promotion had brought it to a point where it was primarily linked to cultural promotion.

This arc was a result of the power struggles that defined design promotion. Retracing these territorial disputes can highlight how professional associations, the industry and the FOC each pulled design promotion in different directions because they upheld mutually incompatible definitions of the profession and of "good" design. Design promotion was initially determined and conducted by the SWB and the OEV, who had their own interests in mind. However, the state increasingly took over. The creation of the FOC in 1975 was a symbolic moment in this takeover which was conducive to the separation between the professional organisations and the state. The associations receded into the background while the FOC took centre-stage on the design scene. The industry remained a protagonist in design competitions throughout the rest of the century, but by the late 1990s its interests were so different from those of the FOC that it distanced itself from federal competitions and created its own. By the end of the 20th century, federal design promotion was defined solely by the FOC, and it had become synonymous with cultural

promotion. In the 1990s, professional organisations and the specialist press had become extremely critical of the FOC's approach to design promotion. The FCAA was aware of a need to revisit the competition. Taking the 80-year anniversary of the SDA in 1997 as an opportunity to redefine design promotion, the FOC began the reorganisation process that culminated in the relaunch of 2002. It introduced a series of new rules in the SDA competition, but also had to convince designers that the SDA were the place to be. To regain a position that was centre stage, the SDA used its exhibition and publication as rhetorical devices.