

# EXCELLENT SWISS DESIGN

On view September 10 - November 22, 2014

Sandra and David Bakalar Gallery, Massachusetts College of Art and Design

**Opening Reception:** Tuesday, October 7, 2014, 6-8PM (7PM pop-up fashion show)

**Panel Discussion:** Thursday, November 6, 2014, 6-8PM, Tower Auditorium

Panelists – Thilo Alex Brunner, Market Award winner in Product Design  
Ludovic Balland, Market Award nominee in Communication Design  
Thomas Würthrich, Market Award nominee in Furniture Design  
Sam Aquillano, Executive Director, Design Museum Boston

Moderator – Elizabeth Resnick, Professor of Graphic Design, MassArt

Featured disciplines: Communication design, fashion design, furniture design, interior design, product design, textile design and interdisciplinary.



Clockwise from left: The *ETAGE Regal* storage unit, designed by Moritz Schmid for the Röthlisberger Kollektion; *The Sketch*, a book on drawing as a thinking process, designed by Judith Dobler; *On* running shoes, designed by Thilo Alex Brunner.

*The following resources have been compiled by the Bakalar & Paine Galleries to provide the academic community with an introduction to Excellent Swiss Design.*

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**Introduction to *Excellent Swiss Design*:**

**EDITION 2013/14**

**EXCELLENT  
SWISS  
DESIGN**

*Excellent Swiss Design* features selections from the Design Prize Switzerland, a biennial award that for twelve years has recognized advancements in the areas of communication, fashion, furniture, interior, product, and textile design. This exhibition showcases innovative projects, from laser-engraved textiles to a faucet that reduces water consumption by 90% to a running shoe that reimagines impact through a hollow-core sole. Celebrating ingenuity and sustainability, this exhibition pioneers a new vision for contemporary design.

*This exhibition is held in collaboration with swissnex Boston and is traveling from Dwell on Design LA, America's largest design event curated by editors of Dwell Magazine.*

## Featured designers:



Ludovic Balland for Typography Cabinet



Sandro Marzo



Julian Zigerli





The ALICE Laboratory at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology (EPFL) and the EPFL+ECAL (University of Art and Design Lausanne) Lab



A C E - Furniture Company



Jörg Boner for DADADUM



INCHfurniture company



Moritz Schmid for the Röthlisberger  
Kollektion



Christian Ferrara



Lucerne College of Art and Design in  
collaboration with Forster Rohner  
Textile Innovations



Claudia Caviezel



Martin Leuthold and team  
for Jakob Schlaepfer  
Textiles



Sabine Affolter and Katja  
Rüfenacht



Judith Dobler



Ursula Capaul, André Oldani and  
Thomas Weber for ALPA





Christian Lehmann



Beat Karrer and the *FluidSolids* team



Thilo Alex Brunner for On



Bagno Sasso Mobili and Astro  
Resources



Michel Charlot for BELAX



## CHANTAL PROD'HOM

Recipient of the Merit Award for her advocacy of Swiss design



PHOTO: espacescontemporains.ch

### **About the recipient:**

- Director, Museum of Design and Contemporary Applied Arts (mudac) in Lausanne, Switzerland
- [www.mudac.ch](http://www.mudac.ch)

"Design Prize Switzerland is happy to honor Chantal Prod'Hom with its Merit award. Both in her work as a museum director, and as an author and a member of committees, panels and juries of the design world, she has been a first-class communicator of contemporary design and has distinguished herself as a committed promoter of young Swiss designers."<sup>1</sup>

**"Design for the sake of design—another chair, another sofa—does not interest me. I believe in imaginative creations which surprise me and which change my understanding of the world."**<sup>2</sup>

**– Chantal Prod'Hom**

The Merit award is given "for continuous services in the field of design," which may include "designer personalities, important design studios, highly regarded companies and also theoreticians who have had a clear influence on the history and present state of design in Switzerland." Unlike other Design Prize Switzerland awards, recipients of the Merit award do not apply for this honor but are instead nominated.<sup>3</sup>



PHOTO: Design Prize Switzerland 2013/14 catalog

## THILO ALEX BRUNNER

Recipient of the Market Award in Product Design for his work with the Swiss running shoe company, *On*



PHOTO: designpreis.ch

### **About the recipient:**

- Graduate of the University of Applied Sciences of Northwest Switzerland, as well as the University of Art and Design Lausanne (ECAL)
- Awarded a Swiss Federal Design Award in 2011
- [www.thiloalexbrunner.ch](http://www.thiloalexbrunner.ch)
- [www.on-running.com](http://www.on-running.com)

"The running shoes of the young Swiss company *On* are based on a completely novel idea - a soft landing and hard push-off...The product unites the advantages of a soft training shoe with those of a tough competition shoe. This is achieved by means of hollow elements in the sole, which respond to ground impact by expanding towards the heel to guarantee a soft landing, at the same time closing and meshing together internally to reconstitute a hard support. In this way the shoe enables the foot to push off powerfully from the ground."<sup>4</sup>

**"The client is king.  
How does a king have to be treated?  
With humbleness if he deserves it.  
With the revolution if he deserves it.  
WE [designers] FIGHT FOR CONCEPTS AND IDEAS."**<sup>5</sup>

### **– Thilo Alex Brunner**

"The market for running shoes is overcrowded and hotly contested—so when a new brand comes along and takes the market by storm, the innovation behind it must convey a promise which it manages to keep—a shoe with qualities never heard of before. In this case a clever design idea has proved capable of competing against the million-strong budgets which the big brands in the industry assign to research and marketing."<sup>6</sup>



PHOTO: designpreis.ch

## SANDRO MARZO

Recipient of the Newcomer Award in Fashion Design for his Autumn/Winter 2013 menswear collection, *Birth*



PHOTO: ecoist.ch

### *About the recipient:*

- Graduate of the University of Applied Sciences of Northwestern Switzerland / Academy of Art and Design Basel / Institute of Fashion Design
- Lives/works in Basel, Switzerland
- [www.sandromarzo.com](http://www.sandromarzo.com)

"Sandro Marzo's debut collection, which at the same time represents the launch of his own label, consists of a total of 16 outfits which are characterized by a mixture or combination of aggressive military style with elements of the sacerdotal...The fabrics used were crucial to the development of the collection. Many of the textiles were created from Marzo's own designs and are the product of his collaboration with prestigious Swiss manufacturers."<sup>7</sup>

In an interview, Marzo explains, "I constantly look at all sorts of garments and tissues and I see textures, which I then try to imagine as textiles. Sometimes there are garments or textures that trigger emotions and sometimes a dialogue evolves from those first emotions. Think about the metal surfaces of artist Richard Serra. I select a number of carrier materials and then impose a governing concept, for instance the rough iron surface of Serra's sculpture onto them. Thereby an originally heterogeneous group of textiles becomes uniform, it's like creating an homogenous army of garments."<sup>8</sup>

**"I constantly look at all sorts of garments and tissues and I see textures, which I then try to imagine as textiles."**

### – Sandro Marzo

The Newcomer award is given "for products and services that are shortly to be introduced to the market." The Design Prize Switzerland jury also considers "young designers who have yet to make a name for themselves on the market."<sup>9</sup>

PHOTO: designpreis.ch



## JÖRG BONER

Recipient of the Newcomer Award in Furniture Design for his work on the DADADUM Cresta Chair

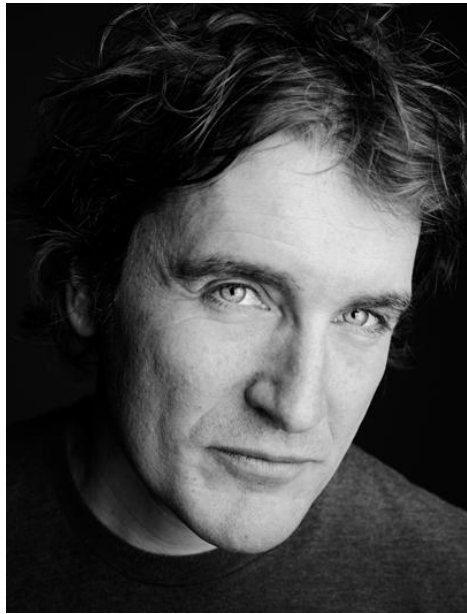


PHOTO: designpreis.ch

### *About the recipient:*

- Graduate of the School for Design Basel
- Teaches at the University of Art and Design Lausanne (ECAL)
- Established his design company, Jörg Boner productdesign, in 2001
- [www.joergboner.ch](http://www.joergboner.ch)
- [www.dadadum.com](http://www.dadadum.com)

"We are impressed by this contemporary reinterpretation of a type of chair that is a traditional feature of interiors in Alpine regions. With its formal qualities, it will blend in well with all kinds of domestic setting. So it may well succeed in its ambition of appealing to a clientele well beyond the borders of its home territory. Impressive features of the CRESTA CHAIR are the innovative production technology and the outstanding degree of comfort, hardly to be expected from a solid wooden chair without any upholstery."<sup>10</sup>

**"The process for me is to have a starting point, to have a starting idea, but then to let the object or the project itself work. In the second part of development, I have to follow the object and not my head...You have to follow the object or the constraints that you have in production, for example."**<sup>11</sup>

### **– Jörg Boner**

"Firstly, to make the chair's joints its center of energy, a part has been designed using finger joint technology that is the longest of its kind...Each part's shape and thickness (including the oval rather than circular legs) has been sculpted to look delicate but remain sturdy to ensure excellent stability. Last but not least, the front legs have been pushed back so all of them use the same joints to create a focal point and thus a new 'K' shape on which to sit."<sup>12</sup>



PHOTO: dadadum.com



## SABINE AFFOLTER & KATJA RÜFENACHT

Recipients of the Research Award for their work on the visual communication tool,  
*Dolorography*



From left: Katja Rüfenacht and Sabine Affolter  
PHOTO: designpreis.ch

### About the recipients:

- Sabine Affolter: Graduate of the Berne College of the Arts; co-founder of the Office for graphic design Affolter/Savolainen
- Katja Rüfenacht: Graduate of the Berne College of the Arts
- [www.dolorografie.ch](http://www.dolorografie.ch)

*"Dolorography* was first developed as a BA thesis and subsequently continued as an MA thesis at Berne College of the Arts. It is a visual instrument which supports and facilitates speaking about the different elements of pain. It consists of a series of abstract images which deliberately avoid

unambiguous semantic identification and so encourage the person who sees them to supplement them with spoken descriptions. The strength of these images which have been specially developed by the designers lies in their lack of definition. In this way they serve as a projection screen onto which patients can project their associations. Practical tests at the Berne Island Hospital have been successful in demonstrating the therapeutic usefulness of the system. It can be seen as a diagnostic option which goes beyond conventional anamnesis."<sup>13</sup>

**"First and foremost the pictures encourage dialogue about pain between patients and doctors."**<sup>14</sup>

### – from the nominators

The Research Award is given "for projects in the field of applied design research, theory of design and history of design that are characterized by innovative methods or new realizations and make a positive contribution to the discussion of design."<sup>15</sup>

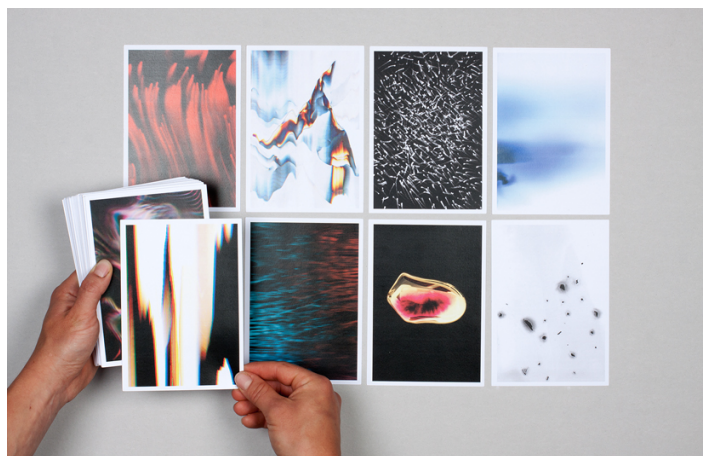


PHOTO: designpreis.ch

## MARTIN LEUTHOLD & TEAM

Recipients of the Market Award in Textile Design for their work on the couture textile collection, *Slow Light* by Jakob Schlaepfer



PHOTO: designpreis.ch

### *About the recipient:*

- Creative Director at Jakob Schlaepfer Textiles
- Awarded a Swiss Federal Design award in 2013
- [www.jakob-schlaepfer.ch](http://www.jakob-schlaepfer.ch)

"Reflecting materials made of minute glass beads form the basis for this couture collection, which has been created with the help of the most sophisticated modern technology. Its fascination is based on the constant interaction between the light situation, the textiles and the angle of view from which you see them. Delicate designs have been superimposed on reflecting surfaces by a laser engraving technique. Depending on the lighting, the patterns may stand out in sharp contrast or disappear altogether. Soft embroideries of reflecting yarn flash into view; shimmering islands of light in the form of flowers and flecks glow on a matte background."<sup>16</sup>

**"Fashion is a source of inspiration for the whole visual, constantly changing world. Fashion has the possibility of reinventing itself every season. Fashion is short-lived, it's trendy, and it has very little to do with beauty."**<sup>17</sup>

### – Martin Leuthold

"Through his instrumental role in the development of new technologies, Leuthold is regarded as a continual innovator. His fabrics that combine high technology with aesthetic appeal make him a trendsetter in the textile industry. He designs some 1,000 fabrics each year, which are produced using laser technology, inkjet printing, 3D, luminescent materials and metal and foam elements. Martin Leuthold received the [Swiss Federal Design award] for his ultrafine polyester fabric, which he coats with aluminium, copper or bronze, and prints on one side with delicate digital floral patterns."<sup>18</sup>



PHOTO: designpreis.ch



## LUDOVIC BALLAND

Nominated for the Market Award in Communication Design for Architecture Books by  
Typography Cabinet



Ludovic Balland  
PHOTO: swissdesignawards.ch

### About the recipient:

- Founded the design studio, *Typography Cabinet*, in 2006
- Awarded a Swiss Federal Design award in 2012
- Teaches typography at the University of Art and Design Lausanne (ECAL)
- [www.ludovic-balland.ch](http://www.ludovic-balland.ch)

"The design of architecture books almost always involves the resolution of similar problems—like the choice of illustrations, for instance, or the question of scale in the processing of plans and graphics. The architecture books shown here stand out in view of their quite different formal appearance, which alludes variously to specific book types—like exhibition catalogues, lexicons, monographs and academic publications."<sup>19</sup>

**The "concept behind a publication 'should spread its influence over every part of the creation process, from the style of commissioning to the choice of materials. If successful, the individual emotional charge of every element...will combine to create a holistic, coherent package.'" <sup>20</sup>**

– Ludovic Balland

"Some of these have a generally classic, others a more experimental packaging and haptic quality. All the books have been realised on the basis of a quite specific editorial concept. This supports the content and the statement being made and lends the projects a unique visual identity."<sup>21</sup>

"Each individual book has been carefully designed to a high standard. The books are notable for the typographical expertise shown and the sensitivity towards the architectural content."<sup>22</sup>

PHOTO: designpreis.ch



## THE ALICE LABORATORY AT EPFL & THE EPFL+ECAL LAB

Recipients of the Market Award in Interior Design for their work on the Montreux Jazz Heritage Lab



Dieter Dietz, Director of the ALICE Laboratory  
PHOTO: alice.epfl.ch

### **About the recipient:**

- Graduate of the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology (EPFL), and studied at Cooper Union with Diller/Scofidio
- Associate Professor for Architectural Design at EPFL, and Director of the Design Studio on the Conception of Space (ALICE)
- [www.alice.epfl.ch](http://www.alice.epfl.ch)
- [www.epfl.ch](http://www.epfl.ch)
- [www.epfl-ecal-lab.ch](http://www.epfl-ecal-lab.ch)
- [www.dieterdietz.org](http://www.dieterdietz.org)

The Montreux Jazz Heritage Lab is “an inhabitable architectural module that allows the user to plunge into 45 years of jazz, blues and rock concerts...The Montreux Jazz Digital Project...had as one of its objectives to oversee the digitization of the festival's archives since 1967. This legacy includes over 5000 hours of [recorded] concerts...”<sup>23</sup>

**“We conceive of architecture as a discipline with accentuated responsibility towards society and the environment: We therefore engage in pointedly open and holistic processes in all our projects. This challenge we live and share with our clients, as well as with partners and citizens.”**

**– dieterdietz.org**

“As part of this vast project, the EPFL+ECAL Lab was tasked to explore a way of transforming [this] heritage into an immersive experience for the user by using new technologies. Research was conducted in close collaboration with ALICE laboratory at EPFL, led by prof. Dieter Dietz, in charge of working on the physical dimension of the experience. The result, a 7x8m module containing no less than 1300 pieces of wood, opens new horizons by setting up a way in which digital formats allow you to travel amidst an almost infinite legacy, to cross decades, to evoke the ties between musicians and concerts and to access much more information.”<sup>24</sup>



PHOTO: designpreis.ch

## About Design Prize Switzerland:

# design preis SCHWEIZ

Design Prize Switzerland was held in 1991 for the first time. The competition, which is held every two years, is designed to boost the importance of Swiss design, so prizes are awarded for outstanding performance in seven professional fields. The competition does not see itself as being just a prize contest – at the same time, it is an institution which aims, through the award of prizes, to establish Swiss design more firmly in the economy.

In a two-phase procedure, the projects submitted are nominated by acknowledged specialists for consideration by the jury. The jury, composed of international experts, then awards prizes to the best of the nominated works. Entries for the competition come from Swiss designers, companies and institutions based in Switzerland or abroad, as well as designers from other countries who are working in Switzerland. Products that have been made in Switzerland are also eligible for entry. As a result, Design Prize Switzerland achieves a broad spectrum of competition entrants and a wide relevance. Diploma projects are represented, as are commercial brands, manufacturers and institutions.

The high prestige of Design Prize Switzerland in the Swiss design scene is based on its being focused on the market economy, and on the fact that it has undergone ongoing development. Its increase in significance is also partly attributable to the international travelling exhibition, which drew a lot of attention to the prizewinning entries in 2009 and 2011. The travelling exhibition is designed to open up growth potential in markets abroad.<sup>25</sup>

## Discussion on Swiss design

*Excerpted interview as featured in form Magazine with Curator Renate Menzi and designers Jörg Boner and Simon Husslein:*

***Renate Menzi, how would you define Swiss design?***

**Renate Menzi:** I remember Jörg Boner once said in an interview that Swiss design has a “watchmakerly” quality. There’s some truth to that. It’s influenced by precision engineering, like the small hinges on folding furniture. Or tubular steel furniture. Although the Swiss were latecomers here in historical terms, they were more refined, with less bends, more reduced. And in terms of finish, the products have always maintained a high standard of quality...

***...Apart from the historical angle, is there still such a thing as typical Swiss design today?***



Victorinox, SwissChamp XXLT, Multi-Tool with 33 functions.  
PHOTO: form.de

**Simon Husslein:** I'm generally not so keen on this kind of pigeonholing by nation. The language of design in Switzerland is very diverse. And in my view, it depends more on the shared motivations of design personalities than on any formal common denominator. But I've also noticed that appreciation for refinement, meticulousness and accuracy is more noticeable here than in other countries where I've not found it to be so conspicuous, or so self-evident.

**Jörg Boner:** I agree in principle, but I would add this: when one speaks of Swiss design, there's a huge difference between the French-speaking world on the one hand and the German or Alemannic world on the other. The dividing line runs right through the country. In the French-speaking world, there is a far greater focus on drawing and the line, whereas in the German-Alemannic-Austrian world there is a far greater emphasis on technical aspects. In the latter you

need an invention, the idea for a construction, before you are allowed to do anything, whereas in the former, perhaps on account of the Latin influence, a specific line may be considered reason enough to embark on a project. Whether or not it is something new in functional terms makes no difference. Since I began teaching at ÉCAL [University of Art and Design Lausanne], this has become clear to me: the same care we would devote to a technical solution is devoted to a line or a color. This is not so much about playfulness, it's the same kind of precision, but expressed in a different way...

***...But there are many products whose design has remained unchanged, such as the Swiss Army Knife ...***

**Jörg Boner:** There's a nice example that illustrates the difference between the French- and German-speaking worlds I was just talking about. In France, Opinel is the pocket knife. It is far more beautiful in formal terms than the Swiss Army Knife, technically far simpler, but it

works. Of course, the Swiss Army Knife functions perfectly, but it's so boring, the design with the two semicircular ends, well ... the Opinel with the curve up to the back, the shape of the handle, it received a great deal more attention in terms of form.

***So if Swiss design exists not as something singular, but as something differentiated by period and region, and if, as Simon says, its only common denominator is an appreciation for that which is good, is there anything - to put the question the other way round - that design in Switzerland lacks?***

**Jörg Boner:** If we look at Denmark or the Scandinavian countries in general, they have similar design DNA to us, but I have the feeling that formal qualities can depend on far broader support within the population than they can here in Switzerland. They have Louis Poulsen lamps at home, their affinity to design is more generalized, design has a broader base there. Here there is a consensus on quality and good finishing, but Good Design is not held in such great esteem among the population as a whole.

**Simon Husslein:** I would agree. The beauty of objects is not the highest priority. The focus is on technical aspects and functionality...<sup>26</sup>

*Read the full interview at [www.form.de/en/magazine/form253/focus](http://www.form.de/en/magazine/form253/focus)*



From left: Victorinox, the first soldier's knife of the Swiss Army, 1891; Opinel, Baroudeur N°8 Rouge Origines, Collection Tradition.  
PHOTOS: form.de

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- <sup>1</sup> Juror comments, Design Prize Switzerland 2013/14 catalog, p. 24  
<sup>2</sup> Excerpted from interview with Chantal Prod'Hom, Ibid., p. 34  
<sup>3</sup> [www.designpreis.ch](http://www.designpreis.ch)  
<sup>4</sup> Design Prize Switzerland 2013/14 catalog, p. 45  
<sup>5</sup> Excerpt from Thilo Alex Brunner's "manifesto," [www.thiloalexbrunner.ch](http://www.thiloalexbrunner.ch)  
<sup>6</sup> Juror comments, Design Prize Switzerland 2013/14 catalog, p. 46  
<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 53  
<sup>8</sup> Excerpt from interview with the Sandro Marzo, [unimaginaireirresolu.blogspot.com](http://unimaginaireirresolu.blogspot.com)  
<sup>9</sup> [www.designpreis.ch](http://www.designpreis.ch)  
<sup>10</sup> Juror comments, Design Prize Switzerland 2013/14 catalog, p. 58  
<sup>11</sup> Excerpted transcription from video interview with the Jörg Boner, [vimeo.com](http://vimeo.com)  
<sup>12</sup> [www.dadadum.com](http://www.dadadum.com)  
<sup>13</sup> Design Prize Switzerland 2013/14 catalog, p. 61  
<sup>14</sup> Comments from the nominators, Design Prize Switzerland 2013/14 catalog, p. 62  
<sup>15</sup> [www.designpreis.ch](http://www.designpreis.ch)  
<sup>16</sup> Design Prize Switzerland 2013/14 catalog, p. 65  
<sup>17</sup> Excerpted from interview with Martin Leuthold, [www.news.imm-cologne.com](http://www.news.imm-cologne.com)  
<sup>18</sup> [www.swissdesignawards.ch](http://www.swissdesignawards.ch)  
<sup>19</sup> Design Prize Switzerland 2013-14 catalog, p. 85  
<sup>20</sup> Ludovic Balland quoted in Le Masurier's "What is a magazine?" [www.textjournal.com](http://www.textjournal.com)  
<sup>21</sup> Design Prize Switzerland 2013-14 catalog, p. 85  
<sup>22</sup> Juror comments, Ibid.  
<sup>23</sup> [www.dieterdietz.org](http://www.dieterdietz.org)  
<sup>24</sup> Ibid.  
<sup>25</sup> [www.designpreis.ch](http://www.designpreis.ch)  
<sup>26</sup> [www.form.de](http://www.form.de)