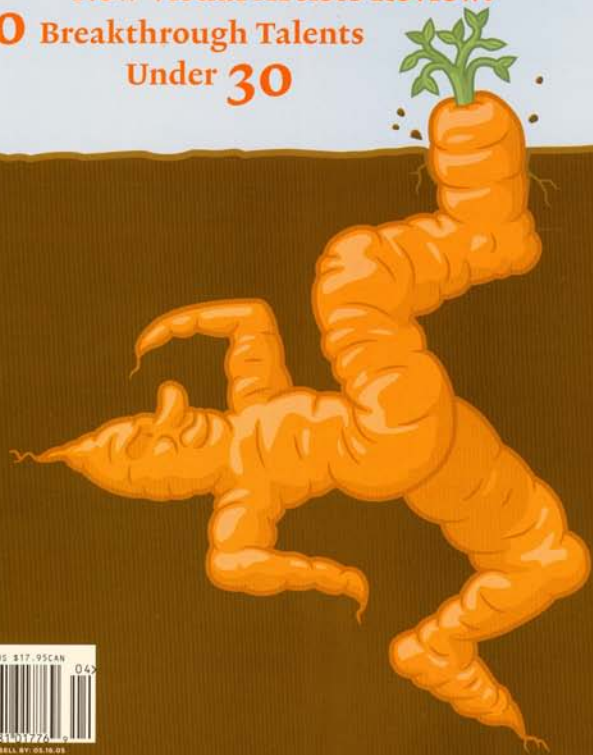


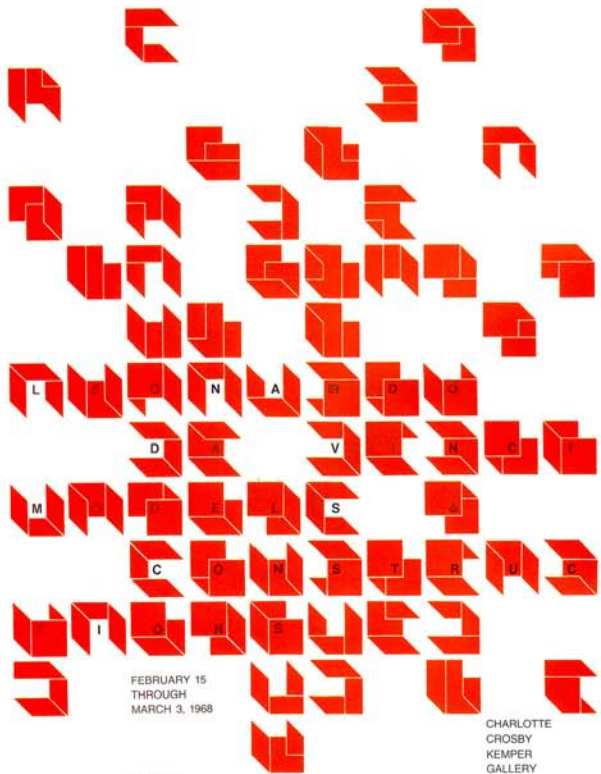
print

DESIGN CULTURE YOUTH
MAR/APR 2006 US\$14.95/CAN\$17.95

New Visual Artists Review!
20 Breakthrough Talents
Under 30



SELL BY: 06.16.06



FEBRUARY 15
THROUGH
MARCH 3, 1968

KANSAS
CITY ART
INSTITUTE

CHARLOTTE
CROSBY
KEMPER
GALLERY

bits and pieces of basel

By Katherine McCoy

KANSAS CITY MAY SEEM AN UNLIKELY SITE FOR A REVOLUTION, BUT IT WAS THERE, IN THE LATE 1960S, THAT A GROUP OF SWISS DESIGNERS FOREVER CHANGED THE WAY GRAPHIC DESIGN WAS TAUGHT IN THE UNITED STATES.

In the summer of 1969, two newly minted graduates of Kansas City Art Institute joined Chrysler Corp.'s Corporate Identity Office, where I was in my second design job. Elegant sans-serif typography and dramatic, abstract forms filled their sophisticated portfolios. They described a vigorous school community

and great teachers. I was envious. Nothing like that had existed at my state university.

In fact, nothing like that existed in any U.S. school. The teach-

ers who had made such a profound impression on the graduates included their program chair, Rob Roy Kelly, and the now legendary Swiss designers Inge Druckrey and Hans Allemann. Arguably, Kansas City Art Institute offered the first comprehensive graphic design curriculum for undergraduates and the first full-time, Swiss-trained faculty in the U.S. While anti-Vietnam demonstrations and the hippie counterculture filled the news, Kelly's budding program in Kansas City revolutionized the study of graphic design.

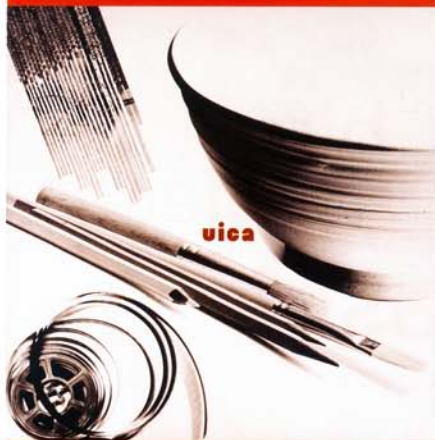
When Kelly arrived at Kansas City Art Institute in 1964, graphic design was still

taught as a commercial art. In professional practice, the field was just emerging from its status as a servant to advertising, led by individual visionaries such as Paul Rand and a few notable design firms like Chermayeff & Geismar and Unimark International. Rand's *Thoughts on Design* was one of the few books on the designer's bookshelf, and the Swiss "bibles" were not yet published, except for Josef Müller-Brockmann's 1961 *The Graphic Artist and His Design Problems*.

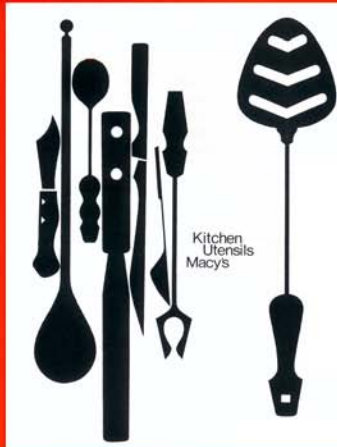
Kelly had an ambitious vision for transforming graphic design education. A Midwestern pluralist and pragmatist, he found his way from advertising art studies at Minneapolis School of Art to graduate school at Yale. There, he took classes with Alvin Lustig and Joseph Albers in the "Graphic Arts" department. After receiving his MFA in 1955, Kelly returned to his undergraduate alma mater and established the first American program titled "Graphic Design."

Kelly built on his experiences when developing the new department in Kansas City, and it quickly produced exceptional graduates who became design leaders. Samina Quraishi, who later served as director of the National Endowment for the Arts' Design

Facing page: Poster for an exhibition (1968). Designer: Gordon Salchow.



vica



Kitchen
Utensils
Macys

Arts program, graduated in 1966. The 1969 class included Jerry Herring of Houston's celebrated Herring Design; Gordon Mattichak, for many years a design manager for Upjohn and Corning; and Gregory Thomas, now head of the University of Kansas's design department after a successful California design practice. AIGA medalist April Greiman graduated in 1970.

The years when the Swiss teachers made their imprint on KCAI were pivotal in the school's history and resulted in an incredible body of highly refined visual design—some of the first Swiss School graphic design seen in America.

THE BASEL CONNECTION

For his first KCAI faculty, Kelly recruited Yale MFAs, including Gordon Salchow, who arrived in 1966. Alvin Eisenman, the venerable former head of Yale's graphic design program, notes that Kelly gained his introduction to Swiss design as a graduate student at Yale. Armin Hofmann, the renowned teacher from Basel's Kunstgewerbeschule, was first invited to New Haven by Herbert Matter, Yale's professor of photography. Then, in 1956, Yale asked Hofmann to fill its annual

overseas guest teaching position, beginning the university's long association with Basel. Kelly recognized the innovation in Hofmann's educational methods. He wrote, "In looking for another source of teachers who could fill that gap in our faculty, I discovered the work of Armin Hofmann's students. I was greatly impressed with their design performance, especially the visual sophistication and intelligence reflected in their work."

Kelly contacted Hofmann, who recommended Inge Druckrey, a recent graduate of the Basel program. Having worked in Zurich's Halpern Agency after school, Druckrey had not planned on teaching, but accepted a position at KCAI in 1966, becoming the first European graphic design teacher trained in Basel, Switzerland, to teach full-time in the U.S. Though she had second thoughts when her TWA jet landed in Kansas City, she soon found the setting to be comforting. "It was a very beautiful campus with good studios for the faculty," she recalls. "The American students were very welcoming."

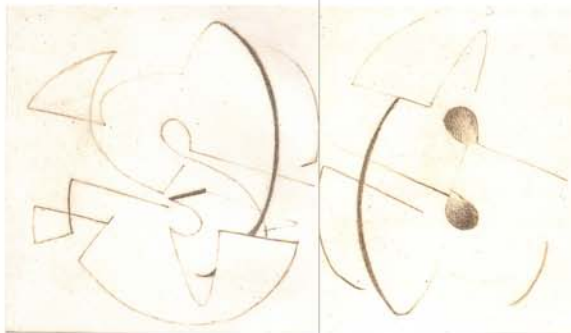
Before leaving Europe, Druckrey went to Tuscany with fellow Basel graduates Hans Allemann and Chris Zelinsky. "I vividly remember sitting under a tree, making the

curriculum, thinking of all I knew of teaching," she says. "I decided to teach a basic design class just with dots to guide students to a specific experience." She also conceived a course on letterform design. In the fall, she team-taught the basic design course with Salchow—the first teaching experience for both.

Kelly needed yet another teacher. Hans Allemann responded to a call from Druckrey and arrived in August 1967. "The flatness,

heat, and humidity—it was like landing on the moon," he remembers. Allemann couldn't understand the Midwestern dialect but soon caught on by listening to the radio. He team-taught with Salchow and ran a letterform course with Druckrey.

Armin Hofmann visited KCAI during those years, inspiring the KCAI students and further cementing the Kansas City-Basel connection. Kathy Stewart Salchow, who graduated in '67, remembers sitting in the auditorium during Hofmann's presentation of Basel design; she could hear April Greiman's audible enthusiasm a few rows behind her. Greiman recalls walking through a gallery



Inge Druckrey recalls that KCAI had "a very beautiful campus with good studios for the faculty."

Facing page, top left: Poster for Union of Independent Colleges of Art (1972), designed by Inge Druckrey shortly after the left KCAI. **Facing page, bottom:** A student's rendition of a Macy's ad, created in Hans Allemann's Junior Communication Design course (1967). **Above and facing page, right:** Letterform explorations from a series produced for Inge Druckrey's class (circa 1967–1968). Designer: Jerry Herring.



exhibition of Hofmann's posters on the way to her dorm. "I was stunned by the magnificence of the posters," she says. "I asked Kelly for an appointment with Hofmann. Hofmann said to just show up in Basel next September."

THE SWISS INPUT

Rob Roy Kelly and Salchow taught students to work with compasses, rubylith, and 3M

Color Key. The Swiss teachers brought their own set of methods. Allemann recounts, "We were the ones who brought plaka

to the U.S., working on boards, refining concepts formally to the nth degree."

Teaching in Kansas City challenged Allemann and Druckrey to adapt their Basel experiences. Allemann notes that when Hofmann instructed them in the early 1960s, his teaching was still in a formative stage. "Our teachers never explained anything to us, and we learned through the process," Allemann says. "In the U.S., that doesn't work. Students had questions. I learned how to talk about design, because I had never verbalized before,

and there were no books to turn to. We were just experimenting." The two developed sequential projects, building on "bits and pieces of Basel." Druckrey says that she, too, had to invent a vocabulary to explain the work. "Everyone would ask us, 'What's this grid about?'" Druckrey recalls. "We hadn't talked about the grid. We just applied it."

American teachers assigned projects and sent students off to execute them, with faculty and students interacting only in critiques. The Basel teachers spent class time in student studios, working closely with students as their projects evolved. "I was much more interested in their process," Allemann says.

Kelly acknowledged that he learned a great deal from his Basel-educated faculty, telling Roger Remington of the Rochester Institute of Technology, "It's not the students who will benefit from the Swiss so much as the faculty," Gordon Salchow agrees: "Prior to my working with Inge and Hans, my own work was clean but stiff... without any real experiential edge or personality."

STAFF DESIGN + CIVIC DESIGN PROJECTS

Kelly believed that faculty members should be practicing designers, and he organized



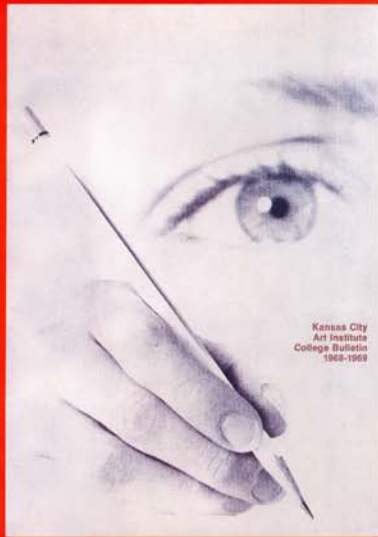
an informal studio called "Staff Design" in a large old house adjacent to the campus. "We worked seven days a week and were on call 24 hours a day," Allemann says. "We were one big community." After working all evening, faculty walked through student studios. Greiman remembers faculty making "the rounds at 2 or 3 in the morning." The faculty designed publications for the school, the neighboring Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, and numerous city agencies.

Convinced that design could improve citizens' everyday lives, Kelly organized large civic projects with Kansas City government and community institutions, an effective application of late-'60s idealism. These altruistic efforts became the focus of most students' degree projects, and many were implemented. The 1966 class developed proposals for the Kansas City Zoo's identity as an assignment; Gerald Haworth designed the symbol that was chosen, a beautifully abstracted lion's head bracketed by elegant letterforms. The faculty also completed civic design projects, often without payment beyond their modest teaching salaries. The Kansas City police commissioned the 1965-1966 Crime Alert public awareness



Top row: Cover and page from annual activity report for Kansas City Police Department (1968). Designer: Hans Allemann.
Above: Proposal for the Kansas City seal (1966). Designer: Carl Kurtz.
Left: Seal created by a KCAI faculty member that was used by the city of Kansas City (1970). Designer: John Baker.

Above, left and middle: Logotype studies produced by KCAI students in Hans Allemann's Junior Communication Design class (1968). The letter combinations are "WD" (left) and "FE" (middle).
Above, right: Student project promoting the play *Mara Sade* (circa 1967-1969). The text at top is dummy copy. Designer: Gordon Mattichak.



Kansas City
Art Institute
College Bulletin
1968-1969



Kansas
City
Civic Ballet

Melissa Hayden
interviewed by Katherine
Annis, Director
Dorothy Stone,
Conductor
Art Director

March 1st 8:00
March 27 8:00
March 28 7:30
Piano Theater
Opera House

Left: Catalog for Kansas City Art Institute (1968). Designer: Hans Allemann.

Below: Letterform designed by a KCAL faculty member as part of the Staff Design program (circa 1968-1969).

Bottom, left: Poster proposal for the Kansas City Civic Ballet created for Hans Allemann's Junior Communication Design course (1969).



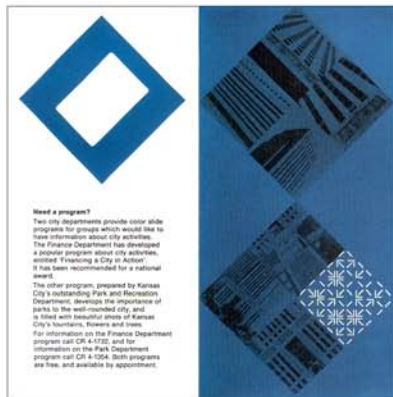
campaign, a police department identity, and several annual reports. Students and faculty even developed a seal for Kansas City.

THE NEXT STEP

KCAL graduates did exceptionally well after completing their education. Gordon Matichak recalls IBM, Chrysler, and Unimark International among the corporations and design firms recruiting on campus. Many grads attended Yale, the only prestigious U.S. graphic design graduate program at that time. Kelly established a policy of recommending one graduate per year to Yale and assumed his recommendation was tantamount to acceptance.

Herring admits, "I treasure what I learned [at Kansas City], but I really don't work that way. The human element was missing, emotional feelings that your mother or mine could relate to." Herring feels his KCAL training helped him make handsome forms but lacked conceptual depth. When he began working at The Richards Group after graduation, he explains that "I'd have two ideas, and the next person would have 30."

For Greiman, KCAL was a seminal experience. "I adored Hans and Inge. I didn't know



Need a program?

Two city departments provide color slide programs for groups which would like to see and understand their city activities. The Finance Department has developed a special program about city activities entitled "Financing a City in Action". It is free to school groups and for a nominal award.

The other program, sponsored by Kansas City's outstanding Park and Recreation Department, describes the importance of parks to the well-rounded city, and is filled with beautiful photos of Kansas City's fountains, flowers and trees.

For information on the Finance Department program call CR 4-1722, and for information on the Park Department program call CR 4-1254. Both programs are free, and available by appointment.

what I was learning, but at a cellular level, I felt I was learning," she says. "It was all about hand skills, purely formal, designing and painting letterforms." She felt the need to explore typography more deeply at Basel, composing metal type rather than working with dummy copy. "I went there to talk about what I had learned at KCAL. I wanted to crack the code." At Basel, she experienced the non-verbal teaching that Allemann and Druckrey had known. Hofmann spoke to her only once in his course: "He patted me on the shoulder and said, 'Ja, ja, ja.'"

THE REVOLVING DOOR

Kelly believed faculty turnover invigorated a program. Allemann and Druckrey each returned to Europe after two years, and Salchow left after three years to build his own program at the University of Cincinnati. Kelly himself left in 1974 after the new president combined graphic design and industrial design into one program.

Even as Kelly and his KCAL faculty moved on, several other schools built related, Swiss-influenced programs that remain leaders today. Ken Hiebert, one of the first Americans to attend Basel's Kunstgewerbeschule, began

an even more tightly rationalized program at Philadelphia College of Art in 1966, with faculty that has included Basel grad Steff Geissbuhler as well as Allemann and Druckrey. Salchow's program at the University of Cincinnati continues to set a national standard. And in 1971, Tom Ockerse, a Yale classmate of Salchow's, began his program at Rhode Island School of Design. Today, Kelly's influence and Basel methods thrive in the Arizona State University graphic design program he established in his last teaching years before his death in 2004.

The KCAL legacy also continues in the active design and teaching careers of the school's graduates. Completing the circle is a new faculty member at today's Kansas City Art Institute School of Design—Kelly Salchow, named after Rob Roy Kelly by her parents, Gordon and Kathy Stewart Salchow. With graphic design degrees from the University of Cincinnati and RISD, Kelly Salchow personifies today's very American interpretation of the Swiss lineage. ●



rob roy kelly told a colleague: "it's not the students who will benefit from the swiss so much as the faculty."

Above, left: Page from a publication produced for Kansas City government. The publication documented the sources of the city's tax income and showed how the money is spent. Designer: Gordon Salchow.

Above, right: Symbol produced for Kansas City Zoo (1969). Designer: Gerald Haworth.