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Entrance Exam Concept

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What kind of talent and temperament does one need to become a graphic designer? Artistic gifts, manual skills, quick comprehension? And who decides who is suitable for training in graphic design? In the mid-20th century, admission to the graphic design programs at Swiss arts and crafts schools was generally subject to an extensive aptitude test, including an entrance exam. The same applies today for students wishing to pursue a bachelor's degree in visual communication. In one specific case, we can use drafts for the examination procedure to trace the changes in requirements for this course from one year to the next.

In 1959, the entrance exam for the Fachklasse Grafik (Graphic Design Class) at the Kunstgewerbeschule Zürich (Zurich School of Arts and Crafts) lasted three full days. Two-and-a-half days were intended for drawing exercises. Over four more hours, the applicants were tested in the fields of calligraphy and composition, and had to write a short essay on the topic "Why have I chosen graphic design as a profession?" [Fig. 26]

Josef Müller-Brockmann, the then head of the

Fachklasse Grafik, proposed major changes in his draft for the entrance exams. For the following year, according to his draft, the exam should be extended by one more day. Müller-Brockmann eliminated calligraphy and almost halved the time for drawing exercises, but increased the time for writing essays to half a day. [Figs. 27, 28] In these essays, the applicants were not only required to explain their motivation and their ideas about the profession. but also examined for their level of cultural education in subjects such as architecture, music, the fine arts, photography, literature, and graphic design. From today's perspective, the questions included about political opinions seem particularly inappropriate. On the basis of the extant documents, it is impossible to determine which answers spoke for or against admitting a student, and how heavily these were weighted in the evaluation.

Josef Müller-Brockmann considered including the analytical intelligence test by Richard Meili as a final task in his draft exam. [Figs. 29, 30] The Meili test aimed at classifying different types of intelligence. Its results were intended to reveal the applicants' "a) [...] more logicalformal [intelligence], b) a vivid, concrete [intelligence], c) an analytical, more receptive [intelligence, ... or] d) an easily combining, inventive intelligence."2

A comparison of the concepts for the entrance exams in 1959 and 1960 reveals the direction in which Müller-

Brockmann desired to steer the Fachklasse Grafik—and probably the entire profession with it. Whereas in 1959 the focus was still on drawing, craftsmanship, and technical skills, in 1960 Müller-Brockmann expected every applicant for the graphic design course to be ready to assume social, political, and cultural responsibilities.

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- 1 Müller-Brockmann 1959: n.p.
- 2 Meili 1951: 301. "a) [...] mehr logisch-formale, b) auf eine anschaulich konkrete, c) auf eine analysierende, mehr rezeptive [...oder] d) auf eine leicht kombinierende, erfinderische Intelligenz."
- 3 Müller-Brockmann did not pursue these goals any further at the Kunstgewerbeschule Zürich, but left the school in 1960.

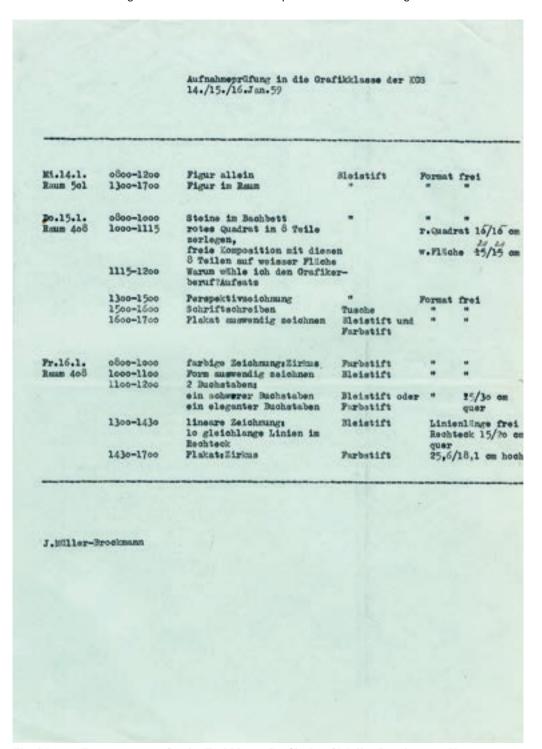


Fig. 26 Entrance exam for the Fachklasse Grafik, Josef Müller-Brockmann, Kunstgewerbeschule Zürich, 1959.

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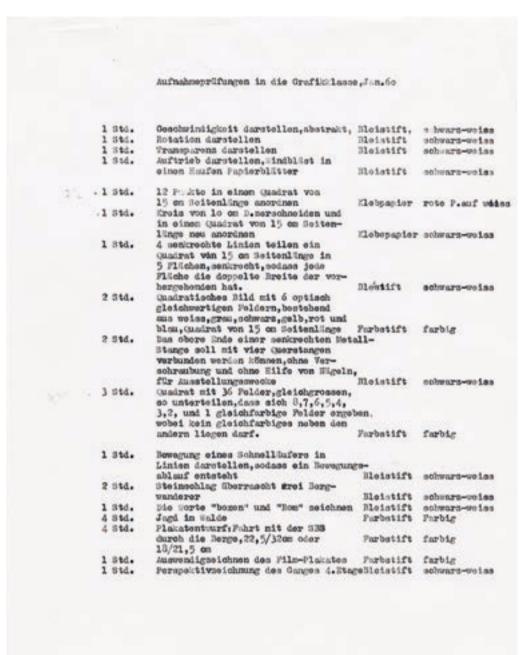


Fig. 27 Draft for the entrance exam for the Fachklasse Grafik, Josef Müller-Brockmann, Kunstgewerbeschule Zürich, 1960, first page.



Fig. 28 Draft for the entrance exam for the Fachklasse Grafik, Josef Müller-Brockmann, Kunstgewerbeschule Zürich, 1960, second page.

[½ hr. Why do you want to become a graphic designer?

½ hr. What does a graphic designer do?

½ hr. What does a graphic designer look like, what should his character be, his approach to the profession, to the world, to his clients, etc.?

2 hrs. Who are the best architects working today, internationally speaking? Why? Who are the best painters? Why? Who are the best sculptors? Writers? Dramatists? Musicians? Composers? Photographers? Graphic designers? Politicians? What people have done something for their fellow human beings? What is the most beautiful new house in Zurich? What don't you like about Zurich?

Possibly Meili test.]

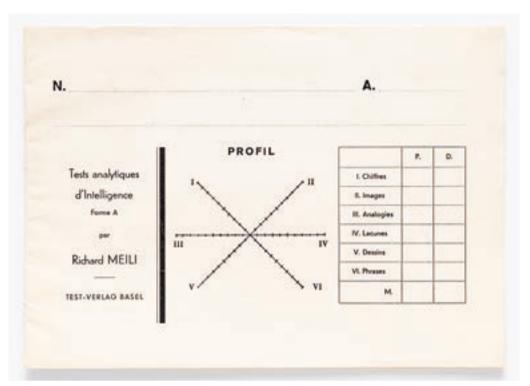


Fig. 29 Cover of *Tests analytiques d'Intelligence* (Analytical intelligence tests), Richard Meili, Test-Verlag Basel, ca. 1951.

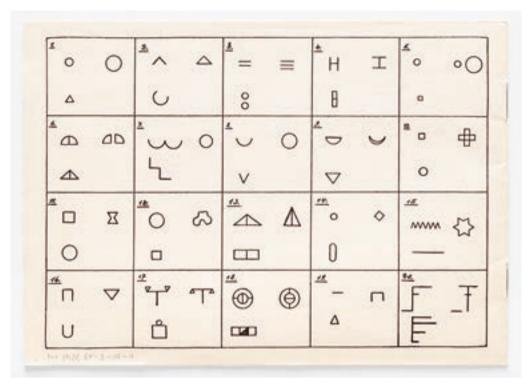


Fig. 30 Chapter "analogies" of *Tests analytiques d'Intelligence* (Analytical intelligence tests), Richard Meili, Test-Verlag Basel, ca. 1951.