



Designer all along the line

Andreas H. Gratze conceived the wide range of Zotter and is in charge of the complete visual Zotter design. The market introduction of Zotter's new chocolate flavours was pioneering and Gratze's design was equally groundbreaking as far as publicity and advertisement is concerned.

This assortment of overwhelming flavours that dashingly comes along with an almost granted visual variety is revolutionary indeed. Andreas H. Gratze - stage designer and visual artist - raised plain packaging to fine art. Together, Gratze and Zotter have created an enormously virtuous liaison of visual arts and chocolate.

Origins and first shapes

Officially, Zotter chocolate manufactory GmbH was founded in 1999. However, the exquisite hand-made chocolates have been invented and produced in a small confectionery in Graz since 1990. Ever since then, Andreas H. Gratze and Josef Zotter, who met and have become friends during their military years, have brooded and fiddled together about new ideas.

Back then, when Andreas H. Gratze viewed the boring designs an assigned agency had offered to Zotter, he went on the warpath. Unquestioned, he created his first packaging designs with enthusiasm and high spirits. The design „Für Schlingel“ captivated everyone by its simplicity and humor. With Gratze's new packaging design, the breakthrough succeeded and the chocolates were sold out immediately.

Despite the great success, Gratze still had to make a good job of convincing and had met with oppositions from many critics and doubters before his design concept eventually prevailed. The forecasts did not look too well. No one believed that an assortment that bets on visual variety could bear up against the market.

The basic visual design

The basic design Gratze created for Zotter chocolates was as simple as it was smart. He set a terse frame with a logotype as the particular feature of recognition. He set a picture field into the frame that could be renewed over and over again and by this principally attracted everyone's attention. This picture field offered boundless freedom of design. Thus, there was no limit set to the growth of Zotter's chocolate variety. By now, the Zotter assortment includes almost 150 different flavours.

Long before anyone anticipated that the art scene would rediscover pictorial art, Andreas H. Gratze introduced his imagery to publicity. The remarkable aspect about the Zotter design is the enormously wide range of different styles and stylistic devices. Stylistic liberty and playfulness distinguishes an artist, however, you can meet these characteristics rarely as fully displayed as it is the case in Gratze's chocolate designs. Mostly, people look incredulously at all the different designs and ask more than once if they all could be actually invented by one and the same artist.

In fact, every image is an innovative conception. Josef Zotter doesn't give any guidelines. Gratze chooses everything himself – style, stylistic devices as well as the colours and shapes that seem to him correlating appropriately to the certain chocolate flavour. However, this correlation never aims to pictures the ingredients but the visual record of complex aromatic structures of taste. Looking for proper synergetic translations from flavour into colour and shape, Gratze definitely benefits from his „sturdy“ job training as a waiter and chef. Although he gave up this job immediately after training, he remembers all the culinary tricks and is familiar with the most exotic ingredients. His artistic demands intent to find the appropriate visual character for each chocolate, creating a portrait of each flavour. This metamorphosis from flavour into image saves Zotter chocolates from their transience and edibility in order to take them out of time.

The Zotter assortment expresses a vital interaction of individuality and variety. The strong emphasis on individuality and the original character creates serial variety. These two positions are postulated as a wide-spanned model of personal thinking and social acting.

Motives and a plea for the arts

The arts came onto the scene because Andreas H. Gratze had enough of publicity that constantly sub- challenges clients. Publicity should be inspiring and inviting - not provoking and flat. With his packaging ideas, Andreas H. Gratze was ready to tender evidence that advertisement can charmingly catch the eye. He wanted to create an artistic packaging that convinces by esprit, humour and high demands.

Unfortunately, the sophistication of publicity is not aimed at the upper level. In order to reach mass impacts, it is usually designed to reach the so called D-class. It remains to be seen if there is such a thing as a D-class after all, however, Andreas H. Gratze follows his very different objectives. He wanted to prove that there are consumers who have higher demands and want to see more than is usually being shown.

Therefore, he began to subversively thwart standard advertisement by using the „surplus value“ of the arts for his packaging. His objective was and is to school and extend the perception – analog to the demonstration given by Zotter chocolates which proved that gustatory perception can be increased permanently. Another objective is to let visual art become effectual in everyday life - art does have much potentials that do not need to be locked away in galleries or other art spaces. Another concern is to appreciate art as a type of media and eventually let art speak out.

After all, design is about creating an adequate packaging which does not promise anything more or less than its content actually offers. Consequently, one of Gratze's „commandments-of-design“ says that packaging should not be more expensive than its content.

Resonance

The resonance on Gratze's packaging is enormous. As a matter of fact, it has an inspiring effect on people as the comments of purchasers do show. Moreover, it has a communicative effect since it is a fruitful conversation topic. Furthermore, the banderoles have become collectors' items and have won an international group of „fans“.

Lots of imitations have come along pairing arts with the commercial product. These days, the idea of an artistic packaging is not as incongruous as it used to be. Of course, there has always been artistic packaging, however, it was limited to the works of famous artists or merchandising products.

Thanks to its visual design, the product could position itself more clearly as a gift. Besides, the certain visual style of packaging becomes an eye-catcher at the point of sale. As a matter of fact, the Zotter fan-community is polarized: There are the ones who buy the chocolate for its taste and there are those, who decide to purchase Zotter for the packaging design in the first place.

Andreas H. Gratze, the Zotter art director receives the highly requested iF- packaging award 2008 in the packaging design category. The judging panel chooses him for translating the taste of the chocolates into the design in such a creative and funny way and AHG is nominated also for the German Design Award 2009.

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On-the-job training as cook and waiter.
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