

Design als Identitätsstifter Politik muß in neue Schlüsselbereiche investieren

Gerhard Feltl

Der bekannte italienische Designer Ettore Sottsass hat festgestellt, daß Design eigentlich eine Metapher ist, nämlich der bildliche Ausdruck einer kulturellen und sozialen Situation. Diesem Gedanken folgend werden Image und Identität eines Landes zum guten Teil über seine Leistungen und Produkte geschaffen, die nationale und internationale Verbreitung finden und etwas von der unverwechselbaren Eigenart eines Landes, einer Region und ihrer Menschen erzählen.

Ich meine damit, daß Industrieprodukte und Konsumgüter, aber natürlich auch Filme und Fernsehproduktionen, Literatur und Malerei sozusagen Identität exportieren – als Reflexion des eigenen Selbstbewußtseins, das sich im kreativen Schaffen ausdrückt. Das ist ein Faktor, den man nicht unterschätzen sollte und dessen volkswirtschaftliche Bedeutung andere Länder (bis hin zur erfolgreichen Selbstdarstellung in ihrer Tourismuswerbung) längst erkannt haben.

So wurden im Jahre 1994 alleine in Europa 8,2 Milliarden ECU an Tantiemen und Honoraren für Design erwirtschaftet. Betrachtet man die Kulturwirtschaft insgesamt, so ergibt sich ein noch eindrucksvollerer Befund. Einem Sachverständigengutachten aus 1994 zufolge erreichte der Bereich Kunst und Kultur in Deutschland (einschließlich der vor- und nachgelagerten Bereiche) einen Produktionswert von rund 120 Milliarden Mark und bot rund 682.000 Menschen Beschäftigung.

Design ist aber nicht nur *Marketingfaktor*, sondern auch *Imagetransporteur* und *Identitätsstifter*. In einer Erklärung des Europäischen Parlaments aus dem vergangenen Jahr heißt es, daß „Design kulturelle europäische Identität schafft, kulturelle Vielfalt ausdrücken hilft und insgesamt für die globale Informationsgesellschaft von elementarer Bedeutung ist“. Ich habe es immer für bedauerlich gehalten, daß in der letzten Regierungserklärung zwar die Informationsgesellschaft als Topos enthalten ist, daß auf die Bedeutung von Kulturwirtschaft und Design für unser Land aber mit keinem Wort eingegangen wurde.

Der aus Prag stammende altösterreichische Kommunikations-Philosoph Vilem Flusser hat die Bedeutung von Design als unverzichtbares Element der Zukunftsgesellschaft weitsichtig erkannt. Der Wert der Waren und damit ihr potentielles Erfolgsgeheimnis liege nicht länger im Produkt, sondern im spezifischen Programm ihrer Erzeugung – in dem also, was Flusser als das „Undingliche“ bezeichnet, im Know-How und dem Wissen über seine Anwendung.

Jede zukünftige österreichische Regierung ist aufgefordert, geeignete Rahmenbedingungen für Investitionen im Bereich der *brainware* zu schaffen. Gerade in Österreich (mit all dem wehleidigen Gerede vom kleinen Land, das wirtschaftlich gegen die Großen chancenbenachteiligt ist) wäre Design-Förderung auch ein

wirksames Mittel gegen die „fortschreitende Selbstinfantilisierung“, welche Rudolf Burger unlängst zu Recht angeprangert hat.

Die am 24. November 1995 stattfindende Verleihung des Österreichischen Staatspreises für Design läßt es geboten erscheinen, dafür zu plädieren, daß neben seinem wirtschaftlichen Stellenwert auch der kulturellen Bedeutung von Design verstärkte Aufmerksamkeit gewidmet wird. Das innovative Potential von Design liegt in seinen kreativen Strukturen, in seinem künftige Verhaltensweisen und Konsumstile antizipierenden Bewußtsein. Die Ausrichtung des politischen und sozialen Verhaltens an über die Medien transportierte *Images* macht es jedoch unverzichtbar, sich dieser imagebildenden Faktoren zu vergewissern und eine Politik zu konzipieren, die sicherstellt, daß in diese Schlüsselbereiche auch tatsächlich investiert werden kann.

Die nächste Regierungserklärung wird somit auch Auskunft geben über die Bereitschaft der neuen Bundesregierung, die Konkurrenzfähigkeit der heimischen Wirtschaft auf dem Weltmarkt abzusichern sowie die wirtschaftlichen und kulturellen Zukunftschancen Österreichs nach dem EU-Beitritt wahrzunehmen.

Eröffnungsstatement zur ÖIF-Dialogreihe (B. Görg und G. Sperl 1997)

Sehr geehrte Damen und Herren!
Liebe Freunde des ÖIF!

Im Namen unseres Institutes begrüße ich Sie sehr herzlich zu dieser Veranstaltung, die dem weiten Thema Architektur gewidmet ist.

Diese Veranstaltung ist gleichzeitig der Schlußpunkt unserer Diskussionsreihe „Design im Dialog“ im Jahr 1997.

Ich freue mich, daß es gelungen ist, für diesen Termin zwei prominente Referenten zu gewinnen, die ich damit gleichfalls sehr herzlich willkommen heiße: Herrn Vizebürgermeister Dr. Bernhard Görg, amtsführenden Stadtrat für Planung und Zukunft sowie Herrn Dr. Gerfried Sperl, Chefredakteur der Tageszeitung „Der Standard“ sowie Autor des Buches „Gegen den Strich gebaut. Architektur zwischen Bauherrn und Planern“, das heute präsentiert wird.

Diese Kombination von denkendem Schreiber (Sperl) und schreibendem Denker, Stadtplaner und Entwickler (Görg) ist hierzulande ja nicht häufig anzutreffen.

Und verspricht eine spannende Diskussion zum Thema Architektur und Wohnen, das Gert Selle als das „irrationalste und teuerste Ereignis von Dauer in unserm Leben“ bezeichnet hat.

Erlauben Sie mir vorab jedoch eine knappe Anmerkung in institutseigener Sache: Aufgrund vielfältiger internationaler Aktivitäten zur Promotion von Kulturwirtschaft und

Design aber auch unser Österreichisches Institut für Formgebung (ÖIF) eine Design-Offensive gestartet. Damit wollen wir auf die besondere Bedeutung von Design für die Positionierung Österreichs in Europa sowie auf die Notwendigkeit eines nationalen Design-Institutes hinweisen.

Teil dieser Initiative ist die laufende Inseratenkampagne im Standard, in der zahlreiche Persönlichkeiten in pointierter Form ein kurzes Statement zum Thema Design formulieren. Darüber hinaus haben wir eine Design-Resolution verabschiedet, die auch von den anderen Repräsentanten der österreichischen Design-Community mitgetragen wird.

Zahlreiche europäische Länder nutzen die Zukunftschance von Design bereits aktiv und haben ihre nationalen Design-Zentren auch als richtungsweisende Kompetenz-Zentren finanziell abgesichert und programmatisch neu strukturiert. Um zu vermeiden, daß Österreich auf diesem wichtigen Kreativsektor wirtschafts- und kulturpolitisch ins Hintertreffen gerät und damit eine wesentliche Zukunftschance verspielt, besteht nach Überzeugung des ÖIF Handlungsbedarf auch von Seiten des österreichischen Gesetzgebers.

Aus diesem Grund führen wir derzeit Gespräche mit den Kultur- und Wirtschaftssprechern der Parlamentsparteien. Darüber hinaus ist eine Themenbehandlung auf parlamentarischer Ebene geplant. Dies soll im Rahmen einer parlamentarischen Enquete geschehen. Von zahlreichen Regierungsmitgliedern und Abgeordneten aus Wien und den anderen Bundesländern haben wir dazu sehr ermutigende und positive Zuschriften erhalten.

Entmutigend war dagegen ein Schreiben des WIFI Österreich vom 14. Oktober 1997, in dem dieser Co-Finanzier unserem Institut lapidar mitgeteilt hat, daß aufgrund der derzeitigen Budgetplanung für 1998 die vom ÖIF gewünschte und beantragte Subventionszusage nicht erteilt werden könne. Und auch seitens des Wirtschaftsministeriums ist die notwendige und – wie ich im Hinblick auf die Planung für das kommende Jahr meine – auch längst überfällige Finanzierungszusage für das Jahr 1998 bis dato nicht eingelangt.

Ende der institutseigenen Durchsage. Und zurück zum eigentlichen Thema des heutigen Abends:

Was den Ablauf betrifft, so wird Dr. Bernhard Görg zunächst das Buch von Chefredakteur Sperl vorstellen und dies mit Grundsatzüberlegungen zur Stadtplanung und Stadtentwicklung verbinden. Anschließend wird Dr. Gerfried Sperl ein Video präsentieren sowie aus seiner Sicht auf die Ausführungen von Planungsstadtrat Görg antworten. Im Anschluß daran erhoffen wir uns eine rege Publikumsdiskussion zur Architektur, Stadtplanung und Wohnen – als einer tatsächlich mehrdeutigen und vielschichtigen Angelegenheit, an der man sogar die gesamte Geschichte der Menschheit beschreiben könnte.

Wie dies der englische Schriftsteller Gilbert Chesterton ironisch und ebenso knapp wie zutreffend getan hat. Ich zitiere:

„Was hatte man dem sogenannten kleinen Mann nicht alles versprochen – das Land Utopia, den kommunistischen Zukunftsstaat, das neue Jerusalem, selbst ferne Planeten. Er aber wollte immer nur das eine: Ein Haus mit Garten“.

Ich danke für Ihre Aufmerksamkeit und bitte Herrn Vizebürgermeister Görg um seine Ausführungen.

Dr. G. Feltl – „Design im Dialog“ – 1. Dezember 1997

Dr. Gerhard Feltl
ist Geschäftsführer der IWG-Holding, Präsident des Österreichischen Instituts für Formgebung (ÖIF)
sowie Lehrbeauftragter am Institut für Kommunikationswissenschaften der Universität Salzburg.

**Design Scoping Mission to Austria
UK-Visit Wiener Stadthalle
November 23, 2000**

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

as Managing Director of Wiener Stadthalle I want to welcome you on behalf of all of my colleagues and our management team.

Wiener Stadthalle is by far the largest arena complex in Austria and one of the greatest multifunctional venues in Europe. This building has been opened in 1958, and we will celebrate our 50 million visitor in the forthcoming week.

The capacity of our main hall is 18.000 visitors. Over the past 42 years we have hosted 90 world or European championships. This is the place, where Frank Sinatra, Liza Minelli, The Rolling Stones, Tom Jones or AC/DC showed up. Elton John will be here on November 25. Sarah Brightman will give a concert on December 12 - to name just a few.

Our management responsibility rests with this building, four stadia, two huge pool areas (indoor and outdoor), two big ice rings, "Szene Wien" with its off-off-Broadway-program, two cinemas as well as some smaller sporting and entertainment activities.

This venue has been built by architect Roland Rainer, who celebrated his 90th birthday just a few months ago. Professor Rainer was also city Council and head of the planning department of the City of Vienna as well as head of the department for urban planning in Los Angeles.

Currently, we are working together with Professor Rainer to add some 15.000 m² to the already existing buildings. Our objective is to redesign and reposition Wiener Stadthalle as an "Urban Entertainment Center". Key elements within the scope of these new permanent attractions will be "Olympic Spirit", "I-World", a kids corner, a shopping mall and various restaurants.

This project proposal has been developed by Professor Roland Rainer. Intensive discussions with English architect Gordon Carey were extremely supportive.

There is another contribution by British creativity: Our new corporate design concept will be developed together with the London-based and renowned design company Pentagram: Mr. Justus Oehler, one of the partners of Pentagram, will come at the begin of December. We will have a working session and finalize our design concept.

I have mentioned design: This leads to your program and your design scoping mission to Austria.

I had the privilege to chair the Austrian Design Institute for a period of five years.

You have already met some fine Austrian companies dedicated to that subject. And you will meet some more companies contributing to and focussing on design.

You will also meet **Karin Hirschberger**, with whom I had worked together at the Austrian Design Institute: I do really appreciate those five years working with Mrs. Hirschberger and her two colleagues, namely

- **Andreas Früchtl**, who moved to London when our institute had been closed. He got a very interesting offer from the British Design Council, where he was appointed Manager of the Research Department. After a couple of years, he left the British Design Council most recently and was appointed head of the Research Department of Philips in Eindhoven, Netherlands.
- Another colleague at the Austrian Design Institute was **Alexandra Gaspar**. After we had organized a challenging Austrian design exhibition in Hongkong in 1997, Mrs. Gaspar got an offer from Henry Steiner. She agreed and is leading and working now in Hongkong as well as lecturing on design issues at one of the Hongkong universities.

In your papers, which I had prepared for today, you will find a lecture which I had delivered as part of our design exhibit in Hongkong. The headline is: "Austrian Design. Tradition and Vision".

Additionally, I have prepared a short description of another project. I refer to a travelling exhibit, where I had participated in defining the goals and objectives as well as selecting the creators, namely Eichinger and Knechtl. The title of this road show is: "Design Now. Austria".

This exhibition has already been presented at Lisbon during Expo '98, followed by Barcelona, Prague, Vienna and London. Next locations will be Shanghai and Hongkong, followed by Washington and New York.

As you may realize, there are some contacts and good relationships. And I do really appreciate all those contacts with your country. I am glad to say, that I am always very impressed when visiting UK.

By the way: There are also personal contacts. My brother-in-law is an attorney. He a graduate of the Vienna University and the London School of Economics. He has his law-firm in Vienna and is also working as solicitor and partner of the law-firm **Gregory, Rowcliffe & Milners** at Bedford Row in London.

Anyhow, you want to challenge me on Austrian design issues. I want to be quite open, and this is my personal statement:

The discussion dealing with design issues has become more vibrant and vital in recent years. Obviously, this reflects our current situation of moving targets and fundamental changes.

Things are constantly flowing. Consequently, it is harder to agree on accepted guidelines, and their functions are limited.

This maybe unfortunate, because in times of uncertainty, points of reference and orientation are increasingly needed.

More and more people are losing their face in the legal and economic framework.

And the believe is fading in the ability to mold our world through a well-planned cooperation of architecture, design and communications.

In the last few years, design-theory has also been challenged by ecological thought and behavioral patterns - demanding, that we do not actually carry out everything that is possible.

Requested alternatives range from limiting the natural resources in the production process and the use of environmentally checked materials, to consumption denial and structural radicalism.

To some extent, this concept of a “counter-utopia” poses a crucial question - one which I see as a central theme in all of our discussions.

I’m referring to the role of design in a world which has become contradictory and uncertain, and lacks a firm sense of direction.

It’s a search for consistency in a changing world - as many international gurus such as Professor Ezio Manzini from the famous Domus Academy, or Dieter Rams from Germany or Lucius Burckhardt, curator at the Centre Pompidou or Professor Elisabeth Moss Kantor from Harvard University have stated.

When I resigned as president of the Austrian Design Institute (after all: I had pre-announced that I would only run this honorary job for five years at the most) I had worked out some ideas for a new Austrian design strategy.

I had submitted subject position statement to the government and all respective bodies, and I want to present a key element in a nut shell.

From my point of view it would be necessary for our country:

1. To develop a strategy on a national basis: Austria is too small to do this on basis of provinces or even cities - as it is done today.
2. To establish a platform supported by the Austrian industry with new means and resources in order to really cooperation on an international basis, utilize global experience and success stories - and to broaden this narrow-minded, out dated and creativity-killing dependency on the Austrian Chamber of Commerce and its bureaucracy.
3. To develop guidelines how to improve design education in Austria. By the way: There was a good opportunity two years ago, that the European College of Design would move over from Geneva to Vienna. We had a lot of discussions with the Austrian Government, back and forth, and again back and forth. Ultimately, there was the decision not to support this project. Now the respective decision makers (should I better say: non-decision-makers) make heavy complains about this negligence.
4. To focus on the various cultural and economic aspects of design as part of an Austrian corporate design strategy - in order to better position our country within Europe.
5. To create awareness by the business community on the importance of actively supporting and sponsoring design initiatives.
6. To ensure that a statement on design and its cultural and economic impact must be part of any governmental platform and program.
7. To reassess current procedures and selection criterias of awarding the so-called “Österreichischer Staatspreis für Design”.

In short: The result by the Ministry of Trade and the Chamber of Commerce (which funded the Austrian Design Institute with an ridiculous low amount of all together 180.000 € a year) was a fussy cackling, than a disapproving nodding - a blunt shut-down of the Austrian Design Institute, precisely 50 years after it had been established.

Here is my résumé:

- Austria is today not a country of design. Our Administration and its officials have neither a design vision nor leadership nor dedication to focus on that subject.
- But we have a lot of very good designers. You have already met some of them, and you will have the opportunity to get into contact with more of those talented designers during your stay here in Vienna.
- Slowly, but surely also more and more Austrian companies are establishing successful links and a fruitful cooperation with designers.

Therefore: With the shut-down of the Austrian Design Institute, we lost a battle - but not the war.

I have prepared some answers, please ask the respective questions.

Thank you for your attention.

G. Feltl

20. November 2000

**UK - Design Focus Seminar
Lecture by Gerhard Feltl
London, May 14, 2001**

Dear Mr. Chairman,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

it is really a pleasure for me to be here and to share some personal thoughts on design and on the merits of designers both from Britain and from Austria.

I'm impressed by the expertise of the previous speakers, looking forward with equal interest to the other presentations and panel discussions.

In my short lecture, I will mainly focus on three areas:

- Why did my company "Wiener Stadthalle" buy British?
- What did we learn from that experience?

- What is the lesson for Austrian design?

Dealing with that, Mr. Stephen Hitchins has also encouraged me to add some comments about the design landscape in Austria and to present some fresh ideas as a result of subject cooperation.

Actually, my statement reflects the experience of my previous job assignments and my current responsibility as Managing Director of “Wiener Stadthalle”. In a nutshell: Austrian architect Professor Roland Rainer has designed the “Wiener Stadthalle” as one of Europe’s first multipurpose facilities in 1958. It is still one of the largest leisure and conference centres in Europe, having welcomed more than 50 million visitors over the years, and having been host to more than 80 World or European championships.

Our management responsibility comprises the main complex, four other sports stadia, two huge indoor and outdoor pool areas, two big ice rinks, a smaller facility with a kind of an off-broadway programme and five other sporting and entertainment facilities.

Reflecting these past 42 years, there is need for a repositioning and face-lifting of our main venue. Therefore, we are currently working together with Professor Roland Rainer to redesign the “Wiener Stadthalle” as an urban entertainment centre and to add some 15.000 square meter to the already existing complex. A proposal for this project already exists. Architect Gordon Carey and his London office have also substantially contributed to this project. And there is another area where we benefited from British creativity:

Our new corporate design concept was developed together with the London based design company *Pentagram*.

As you know: The proof of the pudding is in the eating. Therefore, I’m pleased to hand over some copies of our new design manual reflecting the good result of this cooperation as well as some brochures about “Wiener Stadthalle”.

The first question I will elaborate on is:

Why did we buy British?

Why are we asking a British company to help us promote “Wiener Stadthalle”?

There are both personal and historic reasons. It was in 1987, when the Governments of Austria and Hungary decided to jointly organize a World’s Fair, to take place simultaneously in Vienna and Budapest. I was appointed General Manager of the Austrian Expo Company (on a leave of absence from IBM). One of our first challenges was to jointly develop a logo and a design concept for both cities. Based on an international competition, Mr. *Alan Fletcher* and his design consultancy *Pentagram* won the bid. This was in 1990. His assistant at that time was Mr. *Justus Oehler*, who had joined *Pentagram* the year before and became a partner in 1995. I am glad to say that since then we have successfully worked together on various other projects.

Therefore: Buying British was a decision based on personal and historic reasons. But this decision is also based on sound business judgment, justified by international standards and highest quality.

Other Austrian companies have made the same good experience making use of British creativity:

Take *Neville Brody* and his design concept for the Austrian Broadcasting Corporation (ORF). *Barry Hewson* and his design school in St. Pölten has already been mentioned by Mr. Stephen Hitchins in his opening remarks. *Vivienne Westwood* and *Ron Arad* are lecturing at the Vienna University for Applied Arts. *Sir Terence Conran* has designed and built the much applauded “Hotel Triest” in Vienna. *Sir Norman Foster* has presented a very challenging proposal for redesigning “Nordbahnhof”, a huge area downtown Vienna currently used as a railway-station. And finally: Rachel Whiteread was entrusted with one of the most delicate tasks: the Holocaust Memorial in the heart of the city of Vienna, inaugurated on October 25th, 2000.

During my turn as President of the Austrian Design Institute, I also had the privilege to cooperate with British designers, to exchange ideas and to establish good contacts.

One staff-member of the Austrian Design Institute even moved to London and was appointed Manager of the research department of the British Design Council. He left London most recently and is now Head of the research department of Philips in Eindhoven.

Another good friend and a valuable source of information is Mr. *Michael Thomson*, well know for his work for the British Design Council and for the “Millennium products”, initiated by the British government and Prime Minister *Tony Blair*.

These are just a few examples how British design is stimulating fashion, the media business, architecture and education in our country.

But the same is true for other countries, where British creativity has similar influence: Take for example Paris with *John Galliano* (and his work for “Dior”), *Alexander McQueen* (and his work for Givenchy) or *Julian Mac Donald*.

This leads to the second question:
What did we learn from that experience?

In order to successfully compete on an international scale, Austria as a small country as well as Austrian companies have to better understand that design influences every aspect of our life.

Is there any way to avoid design? My answer is: No. But there are differences in how objects are being used, what they tell us, how they help us and how they influence our perception of reality and ourselves. To quote *Paul Virilio*: “The meta design of customs and social habits in the post-industrial era will substitute the design of forms of the object in the industrial era”.

There is an interesting and encouraging project financed by the Austrian government: “*Design Now. Austria*”. This exhibit has already been presented in Vienna, Lisbon, Prague, Barcelona and London. It will be shown in Tokyo this year, and most likely in Beijing, Shanghai, Washington and New York in 2002.

“*Design Now. Austria*” is the first international show of Austrian industrial design, which provides an overview of the country’s applied arts.

I had the privilege to act as the overall coordinator for this exhibit. Together with the curators *Gregor Eichinger* and *Christian Knechtl* we tried to avoid focussing exclusively on the history and quality of Austrian design. Instead, we captured a picture of Austria’s industry, by referring to the past while trying to show new perspectives for the future. Therefore, this exhibit not only presents a collection of successful Austrian products, but ties them to the country’s economy and technology, with an eye to public subsidies and the codes of communications design. Products by designers who have won state prizes, but whose works have not yet been mass-produced, are shown side by side with the icons of Austrian design.

I do not hesitate to admit, that the idea for this exhibition and for the necessity of presenting Austrian design abroad was heavily influenced by the design initiative of the British government, where Prime Minister *Tony Blair* had defined design and creativity as a cornerstone of his governmental campaign.

Third and final question:

What is the lesson for a small country such as Austria? What seems to be necessary for our own country with regard to design?

Based on what I have just referred to and reflecting the valuable input from many design experts, I would appreciate and recommend this action plan for Austria:

1. To develop a design strategy on a national basis, since Austria is too small to do this on basis of provinces or even cities - as it is practiced today.
2. To establish a platform supported by the Austrian industry with new means and resources in order to cooperate on an international basis, utilize global experience and success stories - and to broaden our narrow-minded chamber system and its bureaucracy.
3. To develop guidelines how to improve design education in Austria. By the way: There was a good chance three years ago to move the European College of Design from Geneva to Vienna. We had a lot of discussions with the Austrian Government, back and forth and forth and back. Ultimately, there was the decision not to support this project. Now the respective decision makers, should I better say: non-decision-makers, complain heavily about this missed opportunity.
4. To focus on the various cultural and economic aspects of design as part of an Austrian corporate design strategy - in order to better position our country within Europe.
5. To create awareness by the business community on the importance of actively supporting and sponsoring design initiatives.
6. To ensure that a statement on design and its cultural and economic impact must be part of any governmental platform and program.
7. To reassess current procedures and selection criteria of awarding the “Austrian States Prize for Design”.

Here is my closing remark:

Austria has indeed a lot of very good designers and architects: Roland Rainer, Hans Hollein, Helmut Lang, Porsche Design, Kiska Design, Herbert Schweiger, Eos - to name just a few.

With the shut-down of the Austrian Design Institute in 1998, the design community in Austria lost a battle - but not the war. Slowly, but surely more and more Austrian companies are establishing successful links and fruitful cooperation with designers from Austria and abroad. The Austrian Government has also started a new initiative to promote design and to focus on the creative industries. We appreciate this indication of intent, nonetheless.

That said, this Design Focus Seminar does matter - as a strong statement and a valuable contribution to create awareness, to further promote this issue and to reflect all of its implications.

Thank you for your attention.

Prof. G. Felzl - May 2001

