

Design Prize Switzerland – Handover to new Sponsors Q & A to the Media Release of 23.9.2021

1.

You took over the Design Preis four years ago. Why are you handing over the sponsorship now?

Four years ago, at the beginning of 2018, we took over the Design Preis from the founding generation and transferred it to the new sponsorship. We had already been working for the Design Preis Schweiz - in different functions - for a long time before that. By the end of 2021, Urs Stampfli and his agency will have covered the award for 22 years, Michel Hueter had been curator since 2011 and Raphael Rossel had been responsible for media relations since 2012. Today, the prize is in an excellent position, financially consolidated, has an excellent network and enjoys the highest reputation. We also introduced a new digital presence, created the «Hall of Fame», a compendium of all nominees and award winners of the last 20 years, and greatly expanded the website for journalistic purposes. And finally, we implemented the self-financed, future-oriented award category «Going Circular Economy». We think this is good time to step down as a united management team and hand over the award to the new generation.

2.

What bearing had Corona in your decision to hand over the award to new hands?

The Corona crisis and its consequences have not endangered the Design Preis Schweiz. Edition 21 was already financed before the outbreak of the pandemic in winter 2020 thanks to the long-standing partnerships and the support of the public authorities and is now on safe ground with a view to Edition 23.

3.

You are handing over the prize to a young sponsor. Why them?

In spring 2021, we evaluated potential candidates and, after an initial assessment, approached several institutions and individuals who seemed the most suitable. After a multi-stage process, we decided on Benjamin Moser, Debora Biffi and Thomas Walliser because they presented the most convincing concept for the continuation of the prize, know the Swiss design industry very well due to their previous activities and enjoy great support. Finally, we are convinced that the new sponsors will continue to develop the Design Preis Schweiz as the institution it is today: a beacon of the Swiss design industry and the only national design platform with international appeal.

4.

What priorities will the new sponsor set?

The new sponsor wants to preserve the good and venture something new. It will take over the Design Preis Schweiz within the existing framework and continue to organise it on a biennial basis in Langenthal. Like the outgoing sponsor, it will rely on the capital of the Design Preis Schweiz – in the form of its «excellence», «know-how» and «network». In the long term, it will expand the continuous, nationwide communication around the award winners, the network and the partners of the Design Preis Schweiz.

5.

As a team, you were the defining figures for 10 years, on and off stage. What have you achieved in this decade?

The Design Preis Schweiz is on a solid financial footing and has continued to grow in relevance and importance as an indicator of Swiss design competence since 2011. The prize has a consolidated competition architecture that recognises and awards all the best achievements in the market and, thanks to its communicative reach, conveys to a broad public what design can achieve as a value-creating innovative achievement. It has also been able to forge new partnerships with business associations in this decade and, thanks to this networking, offers those taking part in the competition unique opportunities to open up markets and raise their profile.

6.

Where is the current curator Michel Hueter heading?

«I am consciously taking time to let something new emerge. I would like to start my one-man company «Enabling. Design. Collaborations.» in 2022 and to be able to work closer to the product and project and provide support until the collaboration between designers and companies is up and running. In addition, I am accompanying some project ideas that have yet to assert themselves. I will focus on the topic of the circular economy, as I see it as the most promising new economic model.»

7.

Will the prize with Langenthal home now become a Zurich Design Prize?

No. It was and still is intended to keep the registered office and awarding ceremony of the Design Preis Schweiz in Langenthal. The new sponsors are committed to Langenthal as a location, and Benjamin Moser, as a native of Langenthal, appreciates the advantages of the town and its easy accessibility from all parts of Switzerland.

8.

What motivates the new generation to take on this «heritage»?

«Debora and I were winners of the Design Preis Schweiz 10 years ago,» says Benjamin Moser and adds: «We benefited greatly from the communication surrounding the award back then and would like to expand this further together with Thomas for future winners and nominees. Furthermore, design is a cultural asset that is firmly linked to the DNA of society in Switzerland and should be promoted. This is what the Design Preis Schweiz has been doing at the highest level for 30 years. We see the best achievements of Swiss designers, companies, institutions and producers who are active here or abroad as a meaningful contribution to shaping a better society. Inspiring people and pointing out new approaches to solutions for shaping the present and the future is our mission.»

9.

What are the backgrounds and future functions of the new sponsorship?

Benjamin Moser

The graduate designer with a master's degree in trend research and communication has a close connection to the Design Preis Schweiz: as a native of Langenthal, he came into contact with the DPS and Designer's Saturday as a child. In 2011, he won the Design Preis Schweiz together with Debora Biffi and in 2015 was a sparring partner for the new «Design Leadership Prize» award category as well as part of the nomination team. Moser switched from the design to the media industry in 2017. Since 2019, he has been editor-in-chief of Wohnrevue and expanded the media partnership between the magazine and the Design Preis Schweiz. In the future line-up of the Design Preis Schweiz, Benjamin Moser will take over the function of curator (currently Michel Hueter).

Debora Biffi

The graduate designer and trained graphic artist won the Design Preis Schweiz in 2011 together with Benjamin Moser and was a sparring partner for the new «Design Leadership Prize» award category in 2015. Biffi has an excellent sense for trends and proven expertise in project management in various project dimensions. After becoming self-employed, she worked as an art director in a Zurich-based creative agency specialising in experience design, communication and interior design. She currently works for various clients in the Swiss creative industry. In the new construct of the non-profit association, Debora Biffi will take on the role of Vice President (currently Raphael Rossel) and will be in charge of visual communication.

Thomas Walliser

The entrepreneur, who is well-known in the Swiss media and international furniture industry, was a successful publisher of the magazines Wohnrevue, Modulor and Edelweiss Travel Magazine for ten years. In 2017, he sold the publishing house to the NZZ Media Group and took over the management of NZZ Fachmedien AG. The latter eventually flowed into the joint venture CH Media. Due to the strategic realignment of the magazines within the CH Media portfolio, this year was the right time for him to reorient himself. He is currently working on various mandates in the design and furniture industry. In the new construct of the Design Preis Schweiz, he will take over the presidency of the association (currently Urs Stampfli) and drive the further development of the Design Preis Schweiz.