

Preface: "Women at the hfg ulm – Curricula and personal histories"

The documentation "Women at the hfg ulm" understands itself as a search and securing of traces of all the women that studied, lectured or were members of the staff at the hochschule für gestaltung (hfg ulm). It is a particular and a particularly attractive characteristic of this survey to show the former hfg-women as a part of their group as well as in their totality. The hochschule für gestaltung, founded in 1953 and closed in 1968 is considered as one of the most important teaching experiments in the post-war era not only in Germany. It disclosed new professional fields. It is not possible to separate such an experiment from the persons that taught there and it is not possible to abstain from the students that were willing to undergo this educational scheme. A relatively small number of these were women. Program and training curriculum of this unusual school attracted young persons from very many countries (38); they were not a fortuitous student staff, but individuals with the readiness to tread new paths. 98 of the overall number of 644 students were women. They came from 19 countries.

"Women at the hfg ulm" is a survey in the form of "life-portraits" of all the former "ulm-women", as far as they were within reach or else there was available information. The vita of the female ulm students will be presented with priority. This presentation is independent of the circumstance whether in their later life they pursued the chosen course of studies, or if after their studies they seized other professions. Their portraits allow a view into their biographies, into the performed assignments during their studies and into their later activities.

The 44 portraits documented here show impressive personal histories. But they also allow the realization, that this first generation of women that searched for a qualification in new professional fields at the hfg, was not often untouched by the conflict with the traditional role distribution. Incidentally highly qualified designers emerged from it. The aforementioned confrontation, as we discovered, often liberated further potentials.

In addition, all former female members of staff are included in "women at the hfg" and they are presented with 11 portraits. These women did not chose their work site by chance and they influenced in their own way the climate of the school, inversely bearing the imprint of the hfg ulm on themselves. The documentation is completed with the biographies of the five guest female lecturers as well as the presentation of the biography of Inge Aicher-Scholl, the co-foundress of the school.

Whilst the scientific critical analysis in the 80ies reviewed the hfg ulm under its historical and structural connections and made first attempts to discuss its design conceptions, these did not preoccupy themselves with the persons that lived and worked there - with the exception of individual personalities of the teaching staff.

The website "Women at the hfg ulm" makes a beginning.

(A brochure with deepening analysis, interpretations and summarizing texts, using further authentic material such as an existing inquest, recorded group and individual talks, etc. is planned in completion to this survey.)

Comments to the previous history

The documentation "Women at the hfg" has a previous history. It goes back to the exhibition of the Design Center Stuttgart "Women in Design", opened in June 1989. It showed for the first time and exclusively the work of female designers from nine European countries. In retrospect this exhibition can be judged as one of the last current large-scale manifestations of the women's liberation movement.

The participation in the exhibition was reduced to female designers on the occupational fields of industrial design and interior architecture. This was also valid for the accompanying catalogue in two volumes for which, in its historical part, Gerda Müller-Krauspe at the time compiled 18 portraits of former female ulm students.

The idea to extend this first survey in due time to include in the documentation the female students of the remaining departments of the hfg in a similar form, became imperious. The further step, to include all the women at the hfg, was more than natural.

The website www.frauen-hfg-ulm.de, a very particular archive, which can be complemented at any time, was developed due to the initiative and in the collaboration of

Gerda Müller-Krauspe
Ursula Wenzel
Prof. Petra Kellner.

Reference to the data material

The implementation of the project 'Women at the hfg ulm' is indebted primarily to 40 former female students who at first go were convinced by our idea of securing evidence by way of a website as a modern possibility of documentation and who were willing to participate actively in it. They provided the requested data for a portrait in three parts: their curriculum vitae, the student works of projects at the hfg as well as documents of their later activity. The material of their student works remaining in their personal belongings - after 4 decades - turned out to be not very much and often not in the best condition. They were completed, as far as they were available, by material of the inventory of the hfg archive. The material of student works deposited there is not very copious indeed. This is due to the fact that for one thing the original hfg-collection had exemplary character and during the phase of disintegration of the school additionally suffered severe losses. On the other side, only 20 deposits of female students are to be found in the hfg archive. These are interesting archivals, yet seldom contain a complete documentation of their basic- and professional training.

A self-portrait on a website is not to the taste of every one and certainly not of every woman. The decision of some of the former female students to abstain from appearing before the public is to be respected. Nevertheless it is our concern to include all 98 former female students and to present them at least with a minimum of basic data as far as it perspires from the student file at the hfg archive. Therefore these former female students as well as the relatively large group of students whose address is up to date unknown (30), are presented in this form. The deceased students, for which no additional information was available, are presented in a similar way. Wherever it was possible to find a reproducible work of these students in the hfg archive it was recorded in the respective page.

Regarding the 89 former female staff persons named personally, the presentation in form of a portrait is limited to those women who decided to participate in this project.