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"Good bye Bauhaus - hello Bologna!

**The University of Art and Industrial Design, Linz
(Austria) in Transition"**

I. In Retrospection

The development of the University of Art and Industrial Design in Linz is closely linked to the development of the city of Linz, the capital of the province of Upper Austria.

We have to go back in history for half a century. According to the historians¹, the end of World War II marked a new beginning for Linz in two ways. „As a centre of the armaments industry, Linz [had] experienced air raids in 1944/45 with large-scale destruction.“ Therefore during the next decades „[d]emocratic politicians began building a modern industrial and cultural city out of the ruins of the erstwhile ‘City of the Führer’. It has to be remembered that: „During the Nazi period it was the personal wish of Adolf Hitler to upgrade Linz to a cultural metropolis on the Danube.“ Therefore (a)fter 1945 the first priority of Linz politicians was to distance themselves from Nazi culture, placing the emphasis firmly on traditionally humanist cultural values.“ This was the climate in which the „Kunstschule“ (Art School) which preceded today’s University was founded in 1947. It had been intended as a „Werkhaus“ according to the principles of the Bauhaus and the reform movement of German Werkbund. It should have become the first „Reform-Art School“ in Austria.² This

¹ The following quotes, if not indicated differently, are taken from the „Timeline history of Linz“ <http://www.linz.at/english/history/18740.asp>

² Kunstuniversität Linz (Ed.): Studienführer 2002/03.Linz 2002, 13

straight forward and explicitly political concept however was never put into practice. The Kunstschule started out rather traditionally with a graphic and two painting classes. However during the following decades it apparently attempted to bridge the gap between a traditional art school aiming at the status of an art academy and Bauhaus ideas by also focussing on design classes and by setting up workshops.

Linz „a city of learning“ and a „city of culture“

In 1966 the Johannes Kepler University with its focus on law, social sciences, economy and natural sciences was founded and in „1973 – at the initiative of the city of Linz and of the regional authorities of the province of Upper Austria in particular the Kunstschule became an academic institution at university level“³ - the fifth and smallest of its kind in Austria. (It has to be mentioned that by then these art institutions did not have university status.)

At that time this new „Hochschule für künstlerische und industrielle Gestaltung“ had nine masterclasses: Painting and Graphics, Graphic Design, Lettering and Bookdesign, Interior Design, Design (which in 79 was redefined into Industrial Design), Ceramics, Threedimensional Design – Metal, Threedimensional Design – Sculpture and a Foundation Class. Two new professorships/departments were instituted, one for Environmental Design and one for Art Education. In the following years a department for teacher training in Crafts Education and a master class for Textile Design were added. (Since then the three departments for Art Education, Crafts Education - now Design and Technology- and Textile Design offer teacher training for secondary schools, for which at least two of these subjects have to be combined as regular study in order to obtain an accreditation.⁴)

Two major exhibitions - „Forum Metall“ in 1977 and „ Forum Design - Design shapes everyday life“ “in 1980 highlighted not only the academic achievements of this period but made the underlying academic concepts visible to the public. The metal sculptures were placed at the banks of the Danube during „Forum Metall“and exist down to the present day. During these years Linz had developed into – selfdescription - „the second biggest business

³ Kunstuniversität Linz (Ed.): Academic Year 207/2008. Linz 2007, 9

⁴ Study plan for the Teaching profession in English

http://www.ufg.ac.at/art-education.bildnerische_erziehung+M52087573ab0.0.html

centre in Austria“ which also provided for the development of „major cultural events such as the Anton Bruckner Music Festival and its offset the Ars Electronica Media Festival (1979)⁵ which by now has gained world wide reputation. Seen in retrospect: „Since the 1970 ´s a new dynamic appreciation of the arts has lead to a wider cultural and social definition of the city's cultural policy with the emphasis on culture and technology (Ars Electronica) and open space culture (Cloud of Sound). In both areas a diverse and distinguished artistic and cultural scene has developed.“⁶

In 1983 the Graphic Design and Lettering and Bookdesign classes were fused into a masterclass for Visual Media Design (graphic design and photography). Only in 1988 a visiting professor for on Film and Video was appointed and Audiovisual Media remained a branch of the Visual Media Design study plan. In 1989 Interior Design was transformed into Architectur maintaining a focus on interior design. In 1993 the Foundation of Basic Design class turned into an Experimental Visual Design class.

Under the **Arts Universities Organisation Act of 1998** our institution obtained today’s status and in 99 it was renamed ‚Kunstuniversität Linz - Universität für künstlerische und industrielle Gestaltung’. Until then the University’s core competencies have remained largely the same.

In 2000 the city of Linz passed The Cultural Development Plan Linz (CDP) which „lays down the guidelines, priorities and framework of pre-requisites for the cultural policy of Linz in the coming years.“⁷

At the beginning of the 21st century major changes occur for which the legal framework is provided by the **University Act (UOG 2002)**. It has transformed the University into a ‚cooperation under public law”⁸, which means that it is now laregly autonomous. This also results in a substantial change in the organisational as well as corporate governance structures. The University is headed by a Rectorate, a Senate and a University Council. Under the new rectorat a long needed theoretical focus with professorships in, cultural studies, art history & gender studies and media theory as well as in time based and interactive media and interface cultures has been instituted. According to this development the University has given

⁵ www.aec.at

⁶ Cultural Development Plan Linz 2000 <http://www.linz.at/kultur/kep/E-start.htm>

⁷ Cultural Development Plan Linz 2000 <http://www.linz.at/kultur/kep/E-start.htm>

⁸ Kunstuniversität Linz (Ed.): Academic Year 207/2008. Linz 2007, 9

itself a new profile in „three principal areas of concentration: integrated media applications (intermediality), spatial design strategies and academic research in art sciences.“⁹

This development deliberately coincides with the new image Linz has given itself. After successfully managing an economic relaunch from heavy industry to modern technologies and investment in to „cultural initiatives, (...) the expansion of existing cultural institutions (...) as well as whole new concepts“ municipality can proudly announce „the increasing significance of Linz as a **city of culture**“ which will eventually culminate in Linz as the **European Capital of Culture** together with Vilnius in 2009.

The University of Art and Industrial Design is currently developing ideas, how to best take part in the programme of **Linz 09**¹⁰

⁹ Kunstuniversität Linz (Ed.): Academic Year 207/2008. Linz 2007, 9

¹⁰ Linz 09 , European Capital of Culture www.linz09.at