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Alpine Arcadia on Funny Cows. A Contribution to the History of Swiss Everyday Graphic Design

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Tourist souvenirs represent a specific aspect of history. They are symbols of the long gone. They are used for individual and collective remembrance. They allow personal and cultural reminiscence. An examination of selected Swiss souvenir objects reveals how contemporary design revisits the late eighteenth century. Swissness, as some cultural historians claim, is not a swiss but a british invention, made more then two hundred years ago, even before the birth of the helvetian confederation in 1848. However, the discovery of Switzerland as a tourist destination brought about a new industry dedicated to the design of swissness: the souvenir industry. It all began with veduta etchings in the late 18th century. Generally, these early souvenirs are counted among arts, not design, and have been widely studied in art history. But since their manufacturers, the so-called little masters, produced them serially and sold them in bulks they may likewise be looked at as graphic design artifacts. Veduta etchings' iconography survives to date not only in touristic campaigns and postcards but also in a bewildering variety of souvenir products. This presentation attempts to draw back how the veduta migrated from the second to the third dimension, as it were from graphic to product design. Furthermore, it will refer to current graphic strategies in souvenir design and indagate how they construe contemporary swissness. The analysis is based on ongoing research into swiss souvenir design history. It basically understands tourism as an imagery machine and souvenir objects as signs trading identity. Methodologically, it combines grounded theory with iconology and semiotics and is rooted both in cultural and design history. Swissness, as some cultural historians claim, is not a swiss but a british invention, made more then two hundred years ago, even before the birth of the helvetian confederation in 1848. However, the discovery of Switzerland as a tourist destination brought about a new industry dedicated to the design of swissness: the souvenir industry. It all began with veduta etchings in the late 18th century. Generally, these early souvenirs are counted among arts, not design, and have been widely studied in art history. But since their manufacturers, the so-called little masters, produced them serially and sold them in bulks they may likewise be looked at as graphic design artifacts. Veduta etchings' iconography survives to date not only in touristic campaigns and postcards but also in a bewildering variety of souvenir products. This contribution attempts to draw back how the veduta migrated from the second to the third dimension, as it were from graphic to product design. Furthermore, it refers to current graphic strategies in souvenir design and indagates how they construe contemporary swissness. The analysis understands tourism as an im-

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