

Blick TV boss Projer: «What we are doing has never been done in Switzerland.»

DOMO

Assured of their
partnership's
potential:
Marc Walder, CEO
Ringier, and
Markus Hongler
(at right), CEO of
la Mobilière



Ringier and la Mobilière: A new
boost to digital transformation

The Perfect Match

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Jump start

The Southeast Asian country of Myanmar is one of the world's youngest democracies. And in recent years, it has experienced an unparalleled spread of smartphone technology. The Ringier subsidiary Duwun benefits from this development and is now the country's most widely used online medium.

by Konrad Staehelin

Sometimes it must be frustrating to be a professional soccer player in Myanmar. They play in a country where soccer is by far the most popular sport. Even in the remotest corners of the country, children and adults wear Manchester United, FC Barcelona or Borussia Dortmund shirts. But Myanmar's stadiums tend to remain empty.

«The standard is just too low here,» says Pyae Phyo Thein. «That's why people support European clubs.» The 30-year-old reporter covers sports for the web portal Duwun in Yangon, Myanmar's business capital. DOMO gets to look over his shoulder as he reports on a championship match between record champions Yangon United and Ispe FC. Some 400 spectators are scattered around the seats in this small stadium in northern Yangon.

The page views at Duwun are correspondingly low. Articles about the English Premier League or Spain's Primera Division take off, those about local soccer do not. «Nevertheless, we are convinced that it is the right thing to be passionate about covering local soccer,» says Pyae Phyo Thein. «We are the biggest news portal in the country - we can't just sit in our editorial offices copying news from abroad.»

The biggest portal in the country - that was quick! In late 2015, Ringier decided to invest in Myanmar's journalism. The project's name was Duwun - Burmese for North Star. This is the star that people have been turning to for thousands of years when seeking orientation. However, providing orientation in a complicated country like Myanmar takes more than mere sports reporting. Which is why Duwun is a portal that also covers everything else, be it politics, news or celebrities.

With its videos alone, this medium reaches an average of 150 million views per month. Within the same period, its reporting accumulates 200,000 comments. Huge!

Photo: Steve Tickner

«We are the biggest news portal in the country - we can't just sit in our editorial offices copying news from abroad.»

Pyae Phyo Thein, sports reporter

This rapid rise was possible because the liberalization of the telecom market turned Myanmar's society upside down. For decades, the country had been cut off, isolated by brutal generals who achieved little except changing the name from Burma to Myanmar and lining their pockets. In 2010, they relinquished much of their power and Myanmar became a democracy. Some sectors have since developed at breakneck speed.

In 2010, a SIM card cost the equivalent of 1,500 US dollars. That was almost double the average annual income. Today, people's incomes have scarcely risen. But a SIM card costs less than one dollar, and the data plans are the cheapest in Southeast Asia. Between 2010 and 2018, mobile penetration, i.e. the number of registered SIM cards per 100 inhabitants, exploded from 1 to 114. In Switzerland, it rose from 124 to 130 during the same period. Leapfrogging is a term economists use to describe what Myanmar has done.

The latest trend is for people to pay their electricity bill and weekly grocery shopping via smartphone at the supermarket. Or that they send money to relatives in other parts of the country using an app. Customers of one of the four mobile phone providers even get to watch football matches of the popular English Premier League on their small screens for free.

The market in this 55-million-strong country has therefore sud-

Empty seats, full commitment: Duwun reporter Pyae Phyo Thein (center) and cameraman Kyaw Ko Sint (at right) interview Tin Maung Tun, the coach of the record champion soccer team Yangon United.

denly become extremely dynamic - and Ringier is at the forefront of this development: for example, by operating the country's largest job portal, MyJobs.com.mm. And it has also taken on the supreme challenge: making online journalism profitable with Duwun.

As with all other investments in Myanmar, Ringier has formed a joint venture with the local publisher Information Matrix for this purpose. This company distributes a wide range of media - from gossip and business magazines to daily newspapers - and, like Ringier, is strongly focused on digital.

All of the operations are located in the same place: In an open-plan office - low ceiling, neon lights, few windows - in downtown Yangon. Here, Duwun's staff work side by side with the other Information Matrix media. This labyrinth of partitions, studios and glass cube individual offices is bustling with activity.

«We may share a space with Information Matrix's print newspapers - but we work completely differently,» says editor-in-chief Kyaw Ko Ko (29). «We were able to build a new portal from scratch, without having to take old traditions into account.»

First and foremost, this concerns the hierarchy: In conversation with Duwun reporters, one notices that they keep mentioning in a positive way how much autonomy they are given. Many of them first earned their stripes at other, more traditional portals before switching to ►



Duwun in the past few years. «At my other jobs, everything was determined from the top down, nobody listened to my ideas,» says Thu Thawdi Soe Min (26), who covers the world of film. «Here, however, I can implement my ideas if the editor-in-chief thinks they are good.»

«Our target audience is urban millennials between 18 and 34,» says editor-in-chief Kyaw Ko Ko. «Our journalists know best what this demographic wants, after all, they themselves belong to this generation.» 51 of his 80 employees are under 30.

Secondly, the entire organizational structure is unorthodox: The umbrella organization Duwun, for example, does not have desks or departments but entire sub-brands with their own identities and concepts. What Duwun Sports, where soccer reporter Pyae Phyo Thein works, and Duwun Tech report on is

self-explanatory. Duwun TV is known for its proprietary original formats. On the vox pop show «Ko Pauk Kwe», for example, telegenic young women do street surveys on topics of daily life.

And then there are two other sub-brands that most consumers do not even know belong to Duwun: Madi deals with the role of women in society. And the site Cele Yatkwa does celebrity stories.

All these sub-brands have their own Facebook sites, which are the calling cards for any venture in Myanmar. For here, with few exceptions, the Internet has so far been synonymous with the blue giant. A browser? Most Burmese don't know how to use one. Most users access the other Ringier project MyJobs.com.mm via Facebook as well. An e-mail address? You really only have one here for logging into Facebook. Even large companies and ministries are best

Young audience, young editors, young bosses: Managing Director Jesse Gage (at right) is 32, Editor-in-Chief Kyaw Ko Ko (at left) is 29.

contacted via Facebook Messenger instead of an e-mail.

Direct clicks on the Duwun homepage therefore only account for a tiny share of the traffic. The app that was originally built is no longer being developed further. Thauung Su Nyein explains why: «In Switzerland, Blick has a long tradition as the first port of call for information. Hundreds of thousands of people routinely launch its app in the morning. On the other hand, anyone in Myanmar who wants to know what's going on in the world checks on Facebook.» Forty-three year old Thauung Su Nyein founded Information Matrix in 2002 with 5,000 US dollars in seed capital and developed it into a major publishing house. In a joint initiative with Robin Lingg (40), Head Global Marketplaces Ringier AG, he helped Duwun get on its feet.

«The dominance of Facebook is both a curse and a blessing. On the



Photos: Nyein Su Wai Kyaw Soe, Steve Tickner

one hand, it allows us to get great user numbers - especially when posts go viral,» Thauung Su Nyein explains. «On the other hand, it makes our work difficult in financial terms.

There is no money to be made with Facebook likes and comments alone.» And even if users come to the Duwun site via Facebook, monetization remains a challenge. Because advertis-

«At Duwun, I can implement my ideas if the editor-in-chief thinks they are good.»

Thu Thawdi Soe Min, film reporter

Top: Thu Thawdi Soe Min (second from left) works for the celebrity portal Cele Yatkwa, a sub-brand of Duwun. This makes makes Kyaw Ko Ko (bottom) her boss, too.

ers' interest in traditional banner advertising is tepid. In addition, Google has not yet placed any ads on websites with content in Burmese.

Jesse Gage is responsible for making sure Duwun's huge audience will soon pay off financially. The 32-year-old American is Duwun's managing director and, apart from the Head of Operations, who is a Filipino, the only foreigner in the company. His latest strategy is called Branded ▶



Content. «This works especially well with videos, because we can precede those with an advertising clip. That way, we can make money even if all the content is consumed on Facebook and people don't come to our site.»

At the end of 2019, a collaboration of this sort allowed Gage to send a four-person video team to the Southeast Asian Games, a major sporting event in the Philippines. All of their articles and videos were sponsored by a sports-drinks producer who paid advertising fees and covered their travel expenses. «We could never have afforded this otherwise,» says Gage. Another example are articles about local culture from all parts of Myanmar, sponsored by the Ford Motor Company. «The sponsors pay to present themselves in this environment. But they have no influence on the content of the article,» says Gage.

Such deals are easier to close for entertainment and sports than for business and political reporting. However, this is not Duwun's main concern anyway, because it is a minefield in Myanmar's media landscape. While the government may have lifted the censorship laws that required content to be submitted to the Ministry of Information for approval before publication in 2012, since then it has imposed many draconian penalties after publication. The most



drastic instance occurred when two Burmese journalists from the Reuters news agency were sent to prison for a year and a half until last summer. They had documented an army massacre of the Rohingya Muslim minority.

By late summer 2017, the crisis that had been smoldering for decades between the Rohingya in the west of the

Reporter Mi Thawdar Aung and video journalist Win Lwin cover the Independence Day celebrations. Duwun journalists usually operate in pairs.

country and the army of the central state had escalated: Troops killed at least 10,000 people. According to the UN, they were acting with «genocidal intent». Proceedings are currently underway against Myanmar at the International Court of Justice in The Hague, and every bit of news sends shock waves rippling through the local media arena.

Photos: Nyein Su Wai Kyaw Soe



Thaung Su Nyein, wearing a longyi, the traditional skirt of Myanmar. His company Information Matrix operates Duwun jointly with Ringier.

«Of course, we can't do entirely without coverage of the Rohingya crisis. We publish essential facts and information in a neutral manner,» says Managing Director Gage. «But we don't investigate and we don't send reporters on site.»

Instead, he wants to make Duwun indispensable in other areas. «My dream is to create a kind of online adult education center,» maintains Jesse Gage. «The financial literacy of the Burmese is inadequate. We could

teach them the basics of household budgeting in videos. We'd certainly find a sponsor for that.» In the next few months, he and his team will also be working on getting Duwun to raise people's awareness of the upcoming elections. These will take place in autumn and will be the third elections since the transition to democracy. Duwun wants to take a neutral stance as a medium and simply provide orientation- as befits the North Star. 🌟

«The dominance of Facebook is both a curse and a blessing. It allows us to get great user numbers. But it makes our work difficult in financial terms.»

Thaung Su Nyein, founder of Information Matrix and Ringier's partner in Myanmar



«A huge surge»

Ringier has sold a 25 percent stake of its company to la Mobilière. «We are breaking new ground digitally,» says Ringier CEO Marc Walder. «We need innovative thinking,» says Markus Hongler, CEO of la Mobilière. But first, the Corona crisis must be overcome.

Interview: Alejandro Velert. Photos: Remo Buesi

«Mutual agreement plays a huge role. Trust, reliability and common goals always matter most.»

Ringier CEO Marc Walder



Marc Walder, 54, has been working for Ringier since 1991. He has been CEO since 2012 and co-owner of the media company since 2018.

Markus Hongler, 62, had already done his apprenticeship at la Mobilière. Thirty years later, he came back, and he has been the insurance company's CEO since 2011.

Markus Hongler and Marc Walder, let's briefly talk about the issue that has become all-pervasive: the coronavirus pandemic. What does it mean for Ringier and la Mobilière?

Marc Walder: The media industry, which is very much based on advertising, will be impacted very strongly. The advertising market will go into a massive decline; in the worst case, it may even implode for some time. Right now, we are still trying to cope with the immediate crisis. Going forward, we will have to talk about efficiency and cost-cutting programs. But I am deeply impressed by how quickly, consistently and thoughtfully all Ringier employees have responded in these challenging times.

Markus Hongler: We will also be impacted. However, it is too early to make any concrete statements. One thing we do know: No one was well prepared for such an event. Thanks to our consistent investment in IT, we were at least able to switch to digital operation quickly. La Mobilière is fully operative and will be there for its customers.

So, we need to prepare for very hard times.

Hongler: A severe recession, in which our customers would no longer be able to pay for their policies, is la Mobilière's worst-case scenario. This cannot be completely ruled out. In general, the question will be what resources companies can draw on in order to make up for declining revenue. Moreover, in situations like this, liquidity is king. Because real estate and stocks are no use when the market for them has ceased to exist.

Will the coronavirus pandemic impact the co-operation between Ringier and la Mobilière?

Hongler: In the short term, yes. The teams that were about to get together and develop use cases can't meet physically now. Also, many team members on the la Mobilière side are now involved in coping with the effects of the coronavirus. One thing that has become clear to me in the context of this pandemic is that digitalization is currently experiencing a huge surge. This has made me even more convinced of the potential of the partnership between la Mobilière and Ringier.

Let's get to our real topic, the co-operation between la Mobilière and Ringier. Marc Walder, how would

you describe Markus Hongler in few words?

I'd rather tell you an anecdote. Markus accompanied Michael Ringier and me on one of our study trips in 2015. In New York, we visited YouTube's big studio, the New York Times, Forbes, Business Insider and the IBM supercomputer Watson. On the second evening, after a very intense day, we were sitting at the hotel bar talking about digitalization, transformation and disruption; the very things this trip was about.

What were the drinks on the counter?

Markus Hongler: (laughing) Tea and cappuccino, honestly! I asked him why Ringier hadn't offered its shares in the Scout Group to la Mobilière. And Marc was, which is rarely the case, utterly speechless!

Marc Walder: To be honest, it had simply never occurred to me.

Markus Hongler: And I really liked this answer, because it represented an opportunity. Because if it hadn't occurred to him, then no one else had thought of it either.

Marc Walder: And here's another thing that's typical of Markus. He said he was interested in Scout24. Just a few months later, la Mobilière took over KKR's shares and became our partner in Scout24 Schweiz AG. You rarely find such determination, analytical skills and courage as in Markus. For an insurance company to invest in a firm that operates digital marketplaces for cars and real estate was a huge leap - let alone four years ago.

Mr. Hongler, digitalization is a bit like reading tea leaves: Nobody knows where we'll be five years from now. Why did you feel that Marc Walder had a good plan for the future?

Markus Hongler: Marc Walder is a charismatic person with visions. And he is able - and this is crucial - to implement them. Ringier had already come a remarkably long way: from analog to digital, from national to international. Ringier has made investments, divested divisions and purchased others. And in doing so, it has gained a strategic edge. And I am doing everything I can to make sure that la Mobilière will also attain this strategic edge in the world of insurance.

Does that mean you've fallen behind?

Markus Hongler: I think we have a lead over our competitors in the



Where it all began: la Mobilière CEO Markus Hongler (front left) in New York in 2015 with Michael Ringier (back left), Marc Walder (back right) and Roman Sigrist (Head Projects Newsroom). On this «study trip», the foursome visited IBM/Watson, YouTube, Google, The New York Times, Forbes and Business Insider, all in a matter of two days. The conversation that got the co-operation rolling took place one evening at the hotel bar. «Over tea and cappuccino,» Markus Hongler maintains.

insurance industry because we invested early on in fields that only pay off in the long term. But Ringier started even earlier than we did, so we can learn from them. Setting the right course for the future is always very difficult. Here's an example: There was a phase when many people at la Mobilière had doubts about car insurance. They thought it wasn't a good fit with la Mobilière's DNA. Today, car insurance is one of the most important sources of our company's revenue.

There is a lot of money at stake in the co-operation between Ringier and la Mobilière. Are good personal relationships at the executive level important or is there a strict separation of personal and business matters?

Marc Walder: They are hugely important. My experience is that - in little things as well as in big ones - the same things matter: certainly, mutual trust. The sense that you are on the same page and have the same goals. That you can rely on each other. And the conviction that together we are stronger. I used to talk to Ottmar Hitzfeld a lot about group dynamics ...

The former coach of the Swiss national soccer team was a consultant to Ringier for a long time.

Marc Walder: I once asked him what he would tell the players before an important game or during the half-time break of a major final. How he would use those moments. He said it was basically the same mechanism as in a junior league amateur soccer tournament. It's about trust, finding the right words to reach the players, togetherness, creating that sense of unity.

Gentlemen, that all sounds so smooth and peaceful!

Markus Hongler: (smiling) We've had our differences of opinion time and again in recent years. But we have always found a common way forward. And that's how you build trust.

A quarter of Ringier now belongs to la Mobilière. How are we to picture this co-operation in concrete terms? On which levels will it take place?

Markus Hongler: We have already gained some experience with the Scout Group. It takes time for the ideas the two parties have at the outset to fit together. There are always setbacks and everyone needs to be patient. But eventually, things click and you have a common plan. FinanceScout is a good example of this. We've been working on it for almost four years. Now, the product has been launched.

So, this will require hard work from everyone involved.

Markus Hongler: These are processes that Marc and I will be following closely. We have defined five areas we want to discuss in greater depth. There is also a dedicated budget for this. We can't yet say what the final outcome will be. What we need is innovative thinking on both sides. So we'll end up with something that will benefit la Mobilière's business and increase Ringier's corporate value. The latter is in the interest of la Mobilière as an investor. And as CEO of la Mobilière, I am interested in obtaining products and services that we would otherwise not be able to purchase from Ringier.

Marc Walder: We agree to pursue our strategy consistently: media, marketplaces and cutting-edge technology. We also agree that digital development often means breaking new ground. That we'll be doing many things that simply don't exist yet. Digital innovation tends to be an adventure ...

What do you mean by that? Can you give us an example?

About ten years ago, I visited Airbnb, when the founders were still working out of a two-bedroom apartment. Over beer and chips, I asked them how big their business might eventually become. The founders said it would always remain a small business that would at best be attractive to students. Because, back then, you couldn't imagine that one day it would be chic to sleep in a stranger's bed and use a

stranger's toilet. Or, as a host, to loan your apartment to complete strangers. Another example - for years, Marc Zuckerberg's answer to the question of how Facebook meant to earn money was «I don't know».

Markus Hongler: Back then, in New York in 2015, we visited Forbes and Business Insider. Those were two meetings that really left their mark on me. At Forbes, everything was first-class. Then, they sold the paper for a three-digit million amount. The buyer wanted to advertise products with the name Forbes - bikes, T-shirts, real estate, whatever. All he needed the magazine for was to manage the brand. The next day, we went to Business Insider.

Marc Walder: Things looked slightly chaotic there.

Hongler: That's putting it nicely. The newsroom was an old table with a tablecloth on it. But Business Insider had long outstripped Forbes in terms of value. It was only then that I fully realized, we have to adapt our business to this new world.

Was there some kind of decisive moment for this current co-operation, too?

Marc Walder: Yes, and it's another hotel story!

Markus Hongler: But this time we weren't drinking tea (laughs)!

Marc Walder: At a dinner in Bern, Michael Ringier and I informed Markus Hongler and Urs Berger, Chairman of the Board of la Mobilière, that we were talking to investors. And less than 48 hours later, Urs called Michael and told him they were interested in Ringier. I was surprised. Michael wasn't.

Markus Hongler: Even while we were at the restaurant, it was clear to Urs Berger and me that we would want to examine this more closely. Let me tell you why. Our products, i.e. insurance policies, are abstract. You can't eat them, touch them or look at them, and they're no fun either. On the contrary: you have to deal with us primarily when something has gone wrong in life.

What are you driving at?

Markus Hongler: How we approach our customers, how we communicate with them is essential to us. Ringier has given us the opportunity to invest in a company that excels in this field. More than that - a company that has completely reinvented this field for itself in recent years.



On February 3, Ringier CEO Marc Walder (right) and Markus Hongler, CEO of la Mobilière, announced that Ringier will sell a 25 percent stake in its company to la Mobilière.

Marc Walder: Within a few days, Michael and I cancelled all flights and meetings with other investors in the U.S., England or Asia. It is highly remarkable that a company that has had so much success in the past 15 years would simultaneously have the foresight to look ten years into the future. La Mobilière is an impressive company.

The media coverage concerning this deal was partly critical. One claim was, for example, that la Mobilière was suffering from end-of-term panic regarding digitalization. Or that Ringier would divert most of the money into the pockets of investors.

Marc Walder: The opposite is true. Seventy percent of the money flows directly into the Ringier enterprise. We are therefore very well prepared for the coming years. This is important for all our employees. Ringier has developed enormously over the past ten years. And it will continue to do so for the next ten years.

Markus Hongler: We have analyzed the media coverage and have come to a slightly different conclusion. But if all you want for your actions is applause, you ought to work in theater. As for the three reports you mention - at first glance, our involvement with Ringier is unusual. But I expect that, in the medium term, the public will get used to the fact that companies from different industries join forces. By the way, shortly after we communicated our co-operation, Swiss Re announced a partnership with the furniture retailer IKEA. In ten years, we'll balance the accounts and see who made the best move in the insurance industry. 🌐

Photo: Maurice Haas

Thank you, Annette

I guess you know them all. Tchi-bo, Darboven, Bahlsten, Dr. Oetker or Adidas and Puma. These companies have three things in common: They have all created big and well-known brands, they are all family firms, and each of these families is or has been embroiled in a fair amount of strife.

Shareholders in a listed company are primarily interested in a higher share price or maybe a dividend. They are usually anonymous and have no personal relationship with each other. Whether they are hedge funds, private equity firms, pension funds or individual shareholders - they have nothing in common but their mutual financial interest.

Family shareholders are a different kettle of fish. They have often grown up in the same generation, maybe having even been raised together. In an intense discussion on the Board of Directors, you may involuntarily recall that even at the age of four, your brother would always take away your toys. Suddenly, during a management meeting, you'll remember that your sister snatched on you more than once to gain an advantage. Or you find yourself sitting in a budget meeting where one of your siblings, yet again, won't play by the rules. But you don't say anything because you always wanted to protect him or her when you were young.

Family firms are a highly emotional construct, where the power of memory often counts for more than your view of reality. All of this was very much on my mind these past few weeks following the death of our sister Annette. What a great shareholder she was!



Michael Ringier, publisher

When our brother wanted to start a new life in the early nineties and decided to sell his stock to the rest of us shareholders, she was a calming influence, who always got on well with each of the siblings and always had a feeling for a mostly fair solution. As a result, the redistribution of the shares was carried out without any noise and perfectly peacefully.

Since it was clear that she would not have any children, she created the solution for the future even then. Her shares were to be passed on to the remaining shareholders. Which constituted a gift in the three-digit million range to her sister's and her brother's family. For her, this was a matter of course.

As a former editor-in-chief, she was primarily interested in the content we produced at Ringier. And some journalists in our company still remember her very clear-cut comments. Keeping mum was not her

strong suit, but she was perfectly willing to accept a differing opinion. And when she was happy with an op-ed piece or an article, we would get a spontaneous enthusiastic or encouraging e-mail or phone call from her. And everyone knew: her praise was tantamount to an award.

When we began to transform the company some twelve years ago, she was on board with great commitment, with even greater confidence in the people involved, and with enthusiasm. She always saw the future as an opportunity, and change was never a burden to her. However, it should be fashioned as much as possible in a socially acceptable form - sometimes so social that we were unable to fulfil all her wishes for the employees, simply because we didn't have the financial wherewithal.

Even when it came to the last big decision the family had to make - granting la Mobilière 25 percent of our shares - her sharp analysis wittily alluded to our old in-house comic strip «Ringgi and Zofi» about a boy and his dog, named after our family and the town of Zofingen, where our company originated: «Ringgi and Mobi, that's a good fit.» Her comment will be our command. Our company has lost a public-spirited, committed and modest co-owner. And I have lost a wonderful sister.

Michael Ringier

Ringier's best photos of the last quarter

The best pictures from the Ringier Group: a headless model, a nightmarish basement, breathtaking heights and the void created by the virus.

BOLERO
KIPLING PHILLIPS
SUSANNE MÄRKI

Photographer
Editor



Inspired by an old Vogue photo spread, **Bolero** editor Kristin Mueller organized an underwater shoot in South Africa with photographer Kipling Phillips. «It reeked of adventure, so I really wanted to give it a shot.» And it did become adventurous. «We were working in a swimming pool and caught a grey, cold and windy day,» says Mueller. That's why our model Catherine isn't just wearing Longchamp's prêt-à-porter but a wetsuit underneath! «And because the clothes became very heavy in the water, a lifeguard always swam beside her for safety purposes.» And how did Catherine manage to pose upside down? «She didn't,» says Mueller. «All you need to do is flip the picture.»

ELLE ROMANIA
CRISTIAN TUDOSE
DOMNICA MARGESCU

Photographer
Editor



A burst of color in Bucharest! Fashion director Domnica Margescu came up with something special for the trend report story in the March issue of **ELLE** Romania. She adapted the location of the photo shoot to the dress. Or vice versa. In any case, photographer Cristian Tudose set his model Iuliana Ghemus in her colorful Moschino dress in the Senate Gallery, one of Bucharest's hippest art galleries. The model posed in front of a painting by young artist Ilinca Gruia. «We thought it was a funny idea. And we're happy that such a strong picture came out of it,» says Domnica Margescu.

L'ILLUSTRÉ
NIELS ACKERMANN
JULIE BODY

Photographer
Editor



The residents of Vercorin in the canton of Valais certainly never get stuck in traffic jams on their way to work. At least, not the ones who fly to their office. And there are quite a few of them. Ten percent of all Vercorin residents have a paragliding license – a world record. And they make a lot of use of their licenses. Their village is situated at 4,363 ft., high above the Rhone valley, and instead of going down to the valley, the people of Vercorin commute by paraglider. They not only get to work this way, they also swoop down to go shopping, to meet friends, even to go fishing. And some of them even take their dog along. Business as usual in Vercorin. In order to get the village and the valley in focus for his pictorial feature, photographer Niels Ackermann climbed the Crêt du Midi, 3,300 ft. above Vercorin. And then, as the GPS data reveals, he took breathtaking photographs of his legs and feet, the village of Vercorin and the Rhone valley, flying at 6,085 ft. above sea level.

L'ILLUSTRÉ
VALENTIN FLAURAUD
JULIE BODY

Photographer
Editor



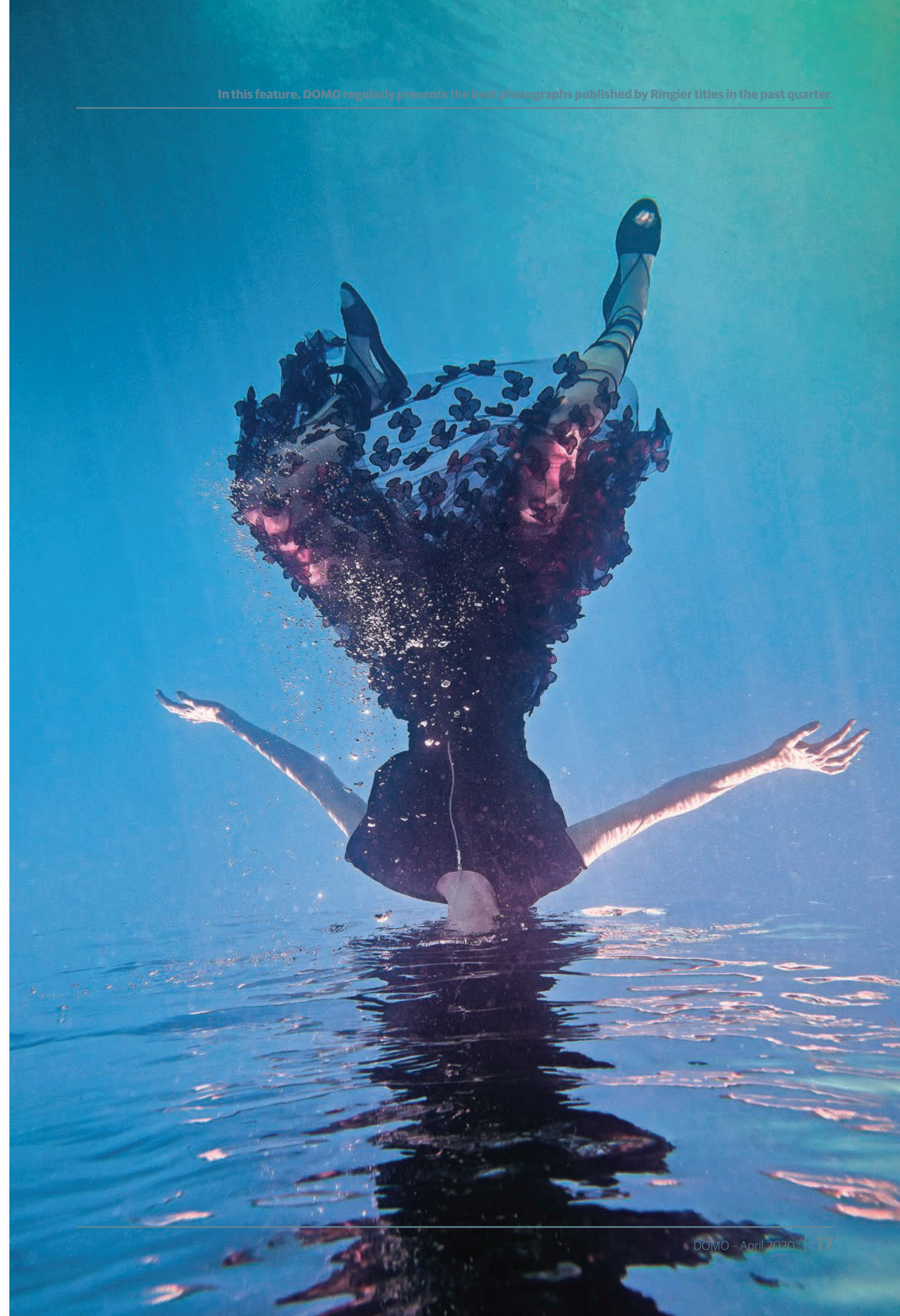
The annual sauerkraut gala for the FC Sion soccer club at the Martigny Exhibition Center is legendary. Thousands of fans and supporters of the Valais cult club make the pilgrimage to the charity dinner – and eat 7,000 portions of sauerkraut, among other things. This year, the gala, like so many other events, fell victim to the coronavirus. Photographer Valentin Flauraud chose an architectural approach for **L'illustré** to capture the void the virus causes everywhere: he shot pictures where major events should have taken place in the French-speaking part of Switzerland over the coming weeks and months. He placed exactly one person into the emptiness of the exhibition hall in Martigny: the host of the sauerkraut dinner, FC Sion president Christian Constantin.

LIBERTATEA
VLAD CHIREA
VLAD CHIREA

Photographer
Editor



On December 17, 1989, one day after the Romanian revolution against perennial dictator Nicolae Ceaușescu broke out, more than 60 people were murdered in the city of Timișoara, most of them by the dreaded secret police Securitate. That same night, operation «The Rose» was carried out. To hide the extent of the repression, 45 bodies were shifted to the Cenușa Crematorium in Bucharest. The corpses were burned in the very place where the atheist members of the Romanian Communist Party were cremated. The ashes of the Timișoara victims were later thrown into the sewers. Since then, the relatives of the deceased and other people have made a pilgrimage along the route from Timișoara to the now abandoned crematorium to commemorate the victims. **Libertatea** photographer Vlad Chirea photographed the setting in the basement of the crematorium using the flashlight of his mobile phone. Untouched for almost 20 years, there are still several unused coffins, an iron cupboard where the ashes were stored, and a container with remains of burnt clothing. Creepy.



FOCUS ON RINGIER



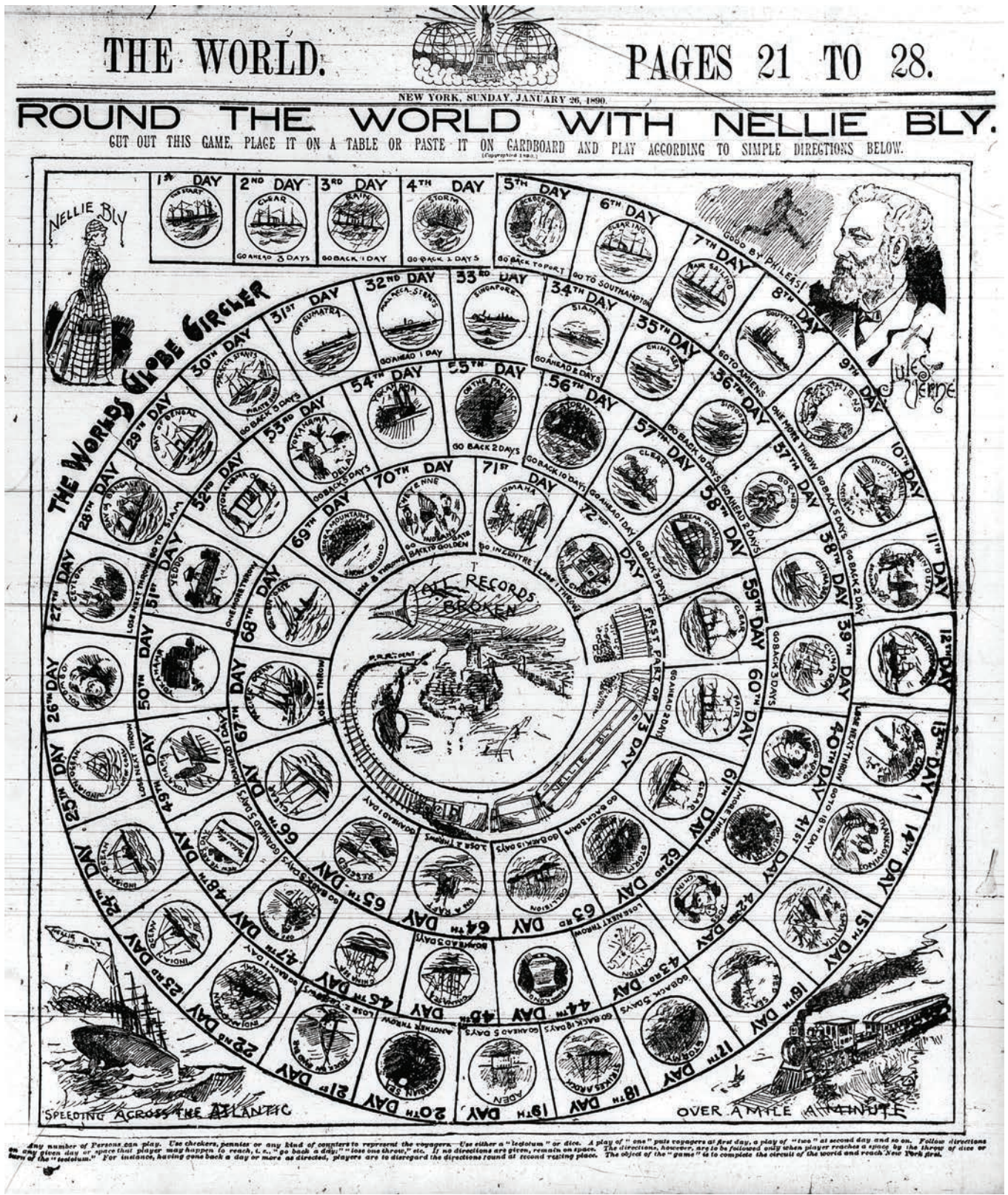
In this feature, DOMO regularly presents the best photographs published by Ringier titles in the past quarter.



Miss Undercover

Fake lunatic. World's fastest woman. And pioneer of investigative journalism – that's Nellie Bly.

By Bettina Bono



On November 14th, 1889, Nellie Bly embarks on her 21,740 mile voyage around the globe for the US newspaper «The World». Her journey is even turned into a board game (picture at left). She travels the distance in merely 72 days, 6 hours, 11 minutes and 14 seconds, thereby beating Jules Verne's Phileas Fogg.

Photos: The Granger Collection, Getty Images



NELLIE BLY

Her boss is speechless. Had one of his reporters suggested this to him, he would not have thought twice. But entrusting a twenty-three-year-old woman with this stunt feels risky to him. Nellie Bly, however, - fearless, cheeky and pretty - is determined to have herself declared insane and admitted to Blackwell's Island, New York's lunatic asylum for women, to be able to report on the abuses at this institution.

John Cockerill, Joseph Pulitzer's right-hand man and editor-in-chief of the newspaper «The World», is simply thrilled by the idea of her undercover investigation and green-lights the crazy venture on September 22nd, 1887. For the purposes of her report entitled «Ten Days in a Mad-House», Nellie Bly stages an elaborate hoax. At home in front of her mirror, she spends a whole day practicing the poses of an insane person and making up meaningless sentences. In order for her to be committed at all, she has to fool the management of a working-class boardinghouse for women, a judge and several doctors. Which she does successfully. Soon, she is one of the 1,600 women wandering Blackwell's Island. Nellie Bly is subjected to baths in icy water, eating spider-infested bread and watching other women being tortured, beaten, tied up and having their hair torn out. After ten days, she is picked up by a member of «The World's» staff. Whereupon her report is published, in which she asks: «What, excepting torture, would produce insanity quicker than this treatment?»

Nellie Bly becomes a star. And her work launches a new species of adventurous young newspaperwomen:

Girl Stunt Reporter

Because the New Yorkers Cockerill and Pulitzer did well to bank on the «Orphan Girl» from Pittsburgh. That was how Nellie Bly signed her very first article on January 25, 1885. It is entitled «The Girl Puzzle» and talks about the girls who are «without». Without talent. Without beauty. Without money. In her article, Nellie Bly looks for solutions and writes: «If girls were boys quickly would it be said: start them where they will, they can, if ambitious, win a name and fortune.» This article in the «Pittsburgh Dispatch» causes such a stir that editor-in-chief George Madden asks for a second piece. This follows immediately. Stronger and more



provocative than the first. He publishes the text under the title «Mad Marriages». In it, Nellie Bly soon gets down to brass tacks: «It is not all girls' mission to be wives any more than all men's to be husbands; and if a girl is fitted to make a good wife it is hard to find a man fitted for a good husband.» This provokes a flood of letters, and Nellie Bly is the second woman ever to be hired by the «Dispatch». And thus, her pen name is born. Back then, women are forbidden to write under their own names.

Nellie Bly's real name is Elizabeth

An unerring eye and a pointed pen - Elizabeth Jane Cochran makes media history under the name of Nellie Bly.

Jane Cochran. Born on May 5th, 1864, in Pennsylvania her mother's predilection for pink children's clothes makes her whole family call her:

Pink

Her father is a wealthy mill owner and Pink is one of his fifteen children from two marriages. When her father dies, she is six years old. This drastically reduces the economic circumstances for the widow and her five children. An irresponsible banker successfully decimates the estate. Pink's mother holds out for three

years by herself before remarrying. Not exactly what one would call a catch: a civil-war veteran, a drunkard and a thug. Although the state of Pennsylvania allows women to divorce, hardly anyone ever avails herself of this right. Except for the widow Cochran. And Pink supports her in her efforts. At the age of fourteen, she stands up for her mother in court.

Pink will never again want to be dependent on a man. She proudly calls herself:

A free American girl

Having said goodbye to the «Dispatch» editor-in-chief with a note - «I am off for New York. Look out for me. Bly» - and having made a name for herself with her report on Blackwell's Island, she fulfils her greatest dream in 1889. Aged 25, she wants to beat the fictional hero of Jules Verne's bestseller «Around the World in Eighty Days». Her goal is 75 days. She makes it in 72. And the most unseemly thing about it: she does it alone. Traveling with only a hand-satchel, in an outfit she can wear for two and a half months. The blue dress made of camelhair fabric will soon become the symbolic garment of the American free women. A million people bet on how fast Nellie Bly will travel. «The World's» sales skyrocket. Her itinerary becomes a board game, her face adorns advertisements for soap and billboards (picture at right).

Nellie Bly changes the world of media. By the time she marries Robert Seaman, a steel millionaire almost forty years her senior, in April 1895, the Bly hype has already produced many daughters. Her husband makes her the CEO of the Seaman empire and later a widow. She is responsible for 1,500 workers, provides them with a library and a gymnasium and abolishes piecework time in favor of a weekly wage.

Years later, when she is brought down by the machinations of her business partner and alleged lover Edward R. Gilman, she returns to journalism. She is the only woman to report from the front lines in the early days of the First World War. There, at age fifty, she makes a name for herself as an intrepid war reporter.

When she comes home, the world she knew has ceased to be. Pushed out of the company by her brother and her own mother, whom she had supported all her life, Nellie Bly goes on to write a humanitarian column



for the «Journal». In the course of this work, she meets little Dorothy, the sick daughter of a heroin addict. They spend Christmas 1921 together. She would probably have adopted the girl. But on January 27th, 1922, Nellie Bly's tired heart gives out.

The heart that wrote every one of her frank and forthright words. 🌍

Following her bankruptcy, Nellie Bly devotes her life to journalism again. In 1914, she writes from Poland about the Eastern front in World War One.

Questions for Nicola Attadio



Nicola Attadio lives in Rome. He works for Rai Radio 3 and has written a biography of Nellie Bly.

Mr. Attadio, what made you write about Nellie Bly's life?

Nellie lived a life of ups and downs. She never let it get the better of her. Her humanity was never diminished. And she left her mark on an entire generation of women.

Is Nellie Bly a feminist?

I think she became one. Especially when she saw the dignity of women trampled upon.

Which of Nellie's journalistic principles still apply today?

That journalism should be the third eye of the reader, because the reader cannot see into everything. And that journalism, if practiced wisely, can change people's lives.

If Nellie Bly came back to earth today, what would she write about?

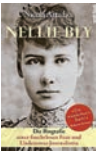
She would report undercover on working conditions at Amazon and Google. Or go amongst the migrants from Libya.

And what would she be particularly happy about?

About the many women in leading positions. But not about the fact that more than 100 years after her first article, there is still no equality of payment for men and women.

What do you want Nellie's story to achieve today?

I hope that her courage and determination will inspire young women and men. Her work should also remind us that good journalism is still the best watchdog against power.



About the book:

Nicola Attadio, Nellie Bly Die Biographie einer furchtlosen Frau und Undercover-Journalistin ISBN: 978-3-280-05715-5

€ 20.00 (D) | € 20.60 (A) | CHF 26.90

Italian edition: Dove nasce il vento: Vita di

Nellie Bly

ISBN-10: 8845296512

€ 11.66



Real unreal

Miquela has millions of fans on Instagram etc. She models, she sings, and she has a boyfriend. But this influencer is not real. Nevertheless, the half-Brazilian avatar is raking in money in the real world.

Text: René Haenig

VIRTUAL INFLUENCER

Miquela leads a fantastic life as an influencer, model and singer - the life millions of young people dream of. This half-Brazilian, half-Spanish 19-year-old jets back and forth between her Los Angeles home and the world's metropolises - New York, Paris, Miami, London. Miquela wears luxury threads from Dior, Balmain, Chanel and Prada, and models for brands like KFC, Nike and Ugg Boots. International fashion magazines like «Vogue» and «Cosmopolitan» celebrate Miquela, she gives interviews on hip American Internet radio shows like that of cult presenter Zach Sang, 26, and last year, she even made out on camera with American top model Bella Hadid, 23, for a Calvin Klein campaign.

Miquela Sousa - her full name - has become the idol of her more than 1.9 million Instagram followers under the moniker «lilmiquela». The teenager stands up for the LGBT community and the «Black Lives Matter» movement. She wants to be taken seriously, which strikes a chord with her Generation Z fans. Miquela's songs «Money» and «Automatic» have been streamed millions of times, and the matching music clips can be found on YouTube.

Miquela has made Internet history. Because this Instagram model is not flesh and blood, but purely a pixel personality, created in 2016 in the 3D application of a computer at the Californian software company Brud. This start-up from Los Angeles' Chinatown, financed with crowd-funding donations from Silicon Valley, claims to create digital story worlds. Brud was founded by Sara DeCou, 28, and Trevor McFedries, 34. Their company is already worth 144 million dollars according to the «Los Angeles Business Journal». Investors include Sequoia Capital, one of the world's most successful venture capitalists. Sequoia previously scored by investing in start-ups like Google, Paypal and WhatsApp.

For two years, Miquela's creators had kept their fans and the public in the dark about whether the influencer/model really existed. It was not until 2018 that DeCou and McFedries confirmed what many had suspected based on the rather artificial-looking photos of Miquela. This Californian is a purely virtual creature. Others had taken her «synthetic» appearance to be a new beauty style. Meanwhile, Miquela is only one of several



digital characters acquiring followers on Instagram etc.

For companies and investors, these virtual creatures are the dawn of a new era, because they can manipulate themselves from the unpredictable personalities and scandals of previous social media stars. For Julian Mohr, 29, founder of the influencer agency Ngyer Media, one thing is clear: «Whether it's Miquela, Lady Gaga or Stuart Little - there have always been made-up characters that many people identified with. The possibilities of data collection will make it easier and easier to create more virtual influencers.» This marketing expert sees the advantage of virtual influencers in the opportunity of «providing them with certain character traits and an outward appearance that appeals to many people». Alina Ludwig, 28, author of the book «Influence!», takes a similar view. «To have absolute control over the appearance, personality and reliability of an artificial partner is an incentive that makes many people's heart sing.»

Virtual celebrities have been around for years. Such as the successful virtual British band Gorillaz, which won a Grammy in 2006. Or Hatsune Miku, who fills stadiums in Japan and does ads for Toyota and

Only half real: super model Bella Hadid (l.) and pixel creature Miquela Sousa posing together for a Calvin Klein campaign.

Google. Their only difference to Miquela: With Miku as well as the Gorillaz, you immediately realize that they are fictional characters.

Nevertheless, some brands increasingly prefer virtual influencers to real ones. There are good reasons for this. Because they are artificial beings, companies have more freedom regarding the conceptual aspects of influencer marketing and more control over the individual posts and appearances and the way their products are presented to the public. And last but not least, the potential for controversy or shitstorms is reduced. No virtual influencer will be caught driving under the influence, let alone stand trial for sexual abuse.

The creative minds behind the profiles of Miquela and her ilk know how social media work. For example, Miquela has a spat with her bestie, then posts a photo showing her playing video games with her boyfriend. Ostensible snapshots, garnished with profound texts about the little everyday issues teenagers have to deal with. Every now and then, when browsing through Miquela's Insta account, one may forget that she is not real. This is also reflected in many comments in which users interact with their idol.

This has provoked warnings from critics. Balmain, for example, was badly bashed on social media. The French luxury fashion house has created a whole army of virtual models. Among other things, the fashion company has been accused of presenting 3D models with quite implausibly ideal body images. Virtual influencers create unrealistic notions of beauty, style and culture, especially in young people. They have neither real opinions nor a personality. Or to put it another way, how can someone like Miquela recommend clothes she has never felt on her skin? Or rave about restaurants where she has never eaten?

It is not only the lack of authenticity that gives pause, but also the question of what motivates the operators of virtual influencers. Brand partners or secret agreements behind the scenes have as yet not been disclosed. In view of how this phenomenon is evolving, caution is certainly indicated. For «lilmiquela» - as is becoming apparent - is increasingly being accepted as a real person in her young community. 🌐

«An incredible sprint»

The resources for making Blick TV are «scarce that you can imagine!» But the fun factor is «insanely high!» Blick TV boss Jonas Projer, Sandra Fröhlich, Head of Live Reporting and Stephanie Seliner, Head of the Video Desk, talk about stress, slips of the tongue, powdering guests and the race they need to win.

Interview: Alejandro Velert Photos: Adrian Bretscher



Giving Blick TV their all: the channel's boss Jonas Projer with Stephanie Seliner (at left) and Sandra Fröhlich in front of the Blick TV studio in Blick's Zurich newsroom.

«This project is appealing precisely because its resources are so limited. What we are doing here has never been done in Switzerland.»

Jonas Projer, editor-in-chief Blick TV



«In terms of presentation and outfit we have to show class. But where the actual clothes are concerned, we are a little more playful and cheeky than others.»

Stephanie Seliner, producer at Blick TV and Head of the Video Desk

«The live reporters only grouse when they have to sit on their hands in the office. They pelt me with suggestions and ideas so they can get out.»

Sandra Fröhlich, producer at Blick TV and Head of Live Reporting



Time is in short supply for the makers of Blick TV. The cellphones of Jonas Projer, Sandra Fröhlich and Stephanie Seliner buzz unceasingly. Before I can even ask the first question of our interview, Jonas Projer hurriedly wolfs down an XXL sandwich. «Sorry, but it's been like this for months,» says Projer.

Jonas Projer, Sandra Fröhlich and Stephanie Seliner - Blick TV was launched a few weeks ago, but you have been working at full throttle for months.

Seliner: That's why my spare time is actually limited to sleep (laughs).

Fröhlich: Yes, the pace is furious. But what's happening here is just great. Everybody's pitching in and going all out to make Blick TV even better. If I won the lottery, I'd still come back here the following day. Because it's so much fun.

Jonas Projer, six months ago, you said in an interview that you didn't yet know what Blick TV would be. Do you know now?

Projer: We know more every day. For example, we very quickly noticed that live broadcasts are popular. So, we have invested in this area. We can now do a four-hour live show, without a break. Even at short notice.

The news situation regarding the coronavirus is extraordinary.

Projer: And it creates a huge need for information. Our team pulls out all the

stops to satisfy this need. In our reporting, we don't dramatize or scandalize, but inform and analyze at the highest level. Our users really appreciate not having to wait for the evening news and getting all the information from us immediately if something happens.

Forty-eight people work for Blick TV. That sounds pretty scant in terms of resources.

Seliner: For 17 hours of broadcasting on 365 days, this is scantly than you can imagine - actually, it's quite impossible! (laughs) The crew scheduling alone is really trying, especially now with the corona crisis.

Fröhlich: It's only feasible because everyone pitches in wherever there's a shortage. For example, doing the make-up and powdering the faces of our guests. That has a bearing on how comfortable a guest feels, whether they'll come back or not. We don't even have a permanent make-up artist! That's why almost everyone in the team takes a turn powdering our guests' faces.

Projer: I have found myself working as a make-up artist, which raised quite a laugh in the newsroom (chuckles). This project is appealing precisely because its resources are so limited. What we are doing here has never been done in Switzerland, not even by a commercial broadcaster. On a traditional TV program, you'll easily have a dozen people working on the tech side alone. Here, all of that is handled by a single person! Which is stressful, but it also stimulates creativity.

Sandra Fröhlich, you are responsible for the live reporters. They were really thrown in at the deep end with the coronavirus situation.

Fröhlich: That's the least of our problems. The live reporters only grouse when they have to sit on their hands in the office. They pelt me with suggestions and ideas so they can get out.

How does the on-location reporting work in technological terms? They don't all lug a satellite dish around.

Seliner: We work with Live View, which is amazingly simple. It's a device the size of a small book and works anywhere you can make a mobile phone call. You hook up the device to the camera and the signal immediately pops up here in the control room. In the past, this would have cost a fortune.

Overall, the competition has reacted quite favorably to Blick TV. Are you surprised?

Projer: It's true, the competition went quite easy on us. I think many of them respect the determination with which Ringier pushed this project forward. Ringier is trying something completely new, they've set up a studio in the middle of the Blick newsroom, they're investing in journalism and creating jobs. And they're doing all this in a shrinking industry. That also makes an impression on the competition. And finally, our staff have earned this respect with a brilliant launch.

Let's talk about the criticisms. People complain that the subtitles are delayed. Is that due to computers that take too long to transform Swiss German into written German?

Projer: No, they're not computers. Interpreters under the direction of Roman Geissmann, an experienced subtitle, simultaneously translate Swiss German into German. An incredibly demanding task, and really exhausting, especially on long programs. Only in the end does a software turn their words into subtitles. This can lead to slight delays.

Why not delay the broadcast by a few seconds?

Projer: We are already doing that. But if we delay it even more, the subtitles - when they are pre-produced - tend to come in too early, so we're walking a real tightrope. But here, too: I'm impressed how well it all works even now, despite our lean means, and how it's getting better every day.

A TV channel on the Internet, that's quite novel. But Blick TV doesn't have a single format that blows people away. Or something totally new.

Projer: You think so? I think we're doing a lot of new stuff. But people need to discover and appreciate that for themselves. We don't have to blow our own horn. **Fröhlich:** We're more authentic, sometimes a bit rougher around the edges than other broadcasters. Our on-location reporters don't spend hours rehearsing their

contributions. It's all real and live, and people like that.

Projer: Coolness is overrated. In life, we all fail time and again at the little things, and so do we at Blick TV. If a live reporter says she's lost the thread, I find that likeable and approachable. And after all, it doesn't happen all the time.

Fröhlich: The experts from the newsroom are also doing a great job. They're journalists really, not TV stars. But they are very competent, they're passionate about issues. No TV broadcaster has as many specialists as we do.

Seliner: Unfortunately, Blick TV's editors, who write the copy for the segments and edit the videos, i.e. work in the background, tend to get somewhat overlooked.

As a viewer, you can't get a sense of where you are in the program, at the beginning or at the end. Is that deliberate?

Fröhlich: Basically, people should be able to join the program at any time. After all, you don't get on a train or a bus on the hour and watch Blick TV. And so, some people will start with sports, others with news.

Projer: Yes, that is deliberate. But we've already made some adjustments since the launch. Starting out, we had a wilder mix of topics; now we focus a bit more on news in the live segments. This also has to do with the fact that everything is about the coronavirus right now. I think we have already managed to improve audience orientation in the live segments.

You have a good mix of hosts. Both in terms of their presentation and their appearance.

Seliner: As far as the actual clothes are concerned, we are a little more playful and cheeky than traditional TV channels. But in terms of presentation and outfit we have to show class. Because the host's appearance in the studio must always be appropriate to the possibility of a serious topic.

Projer: All the more reason for hosts to have the occasional casual chat in-between segments. That's when you might say something you probably wouldn't say if you thought twice. It's precisely this spontaneous, unrehearsed groove that makes Blick TV special.

Looking six months ahead, what do you see?

Projer: Right now, we have just slipped from one exceptional situation - our launch - directly into the next. So, when the coronavirus crisis is over, we will have to work out what standard operations look like. The entire Blick newsroom has accomplished an incredible sprint over the last twelve months! Now we are limping through the corona crisis - and we still have the edge when you look at the competition. Only once that's over will our TV face the true - and most beautiful - challenge: the marathon. If we pace ourselves wisely and learn a lot very quickly, we will win this race too. 🌍

Blick TV in figures

Switzerland's first digital TV is up and running – and how! Blick TV broadcasts live for 17 hours every day, with 48 employees providing information on politics, business, sports and entertainment. And, if the men and women who make Blick TV feel like it, they can put an elephant in the studio.

An international project

Around the globe. These are the countries supplying the crucial components for Blick TV.

USA/Great Britain
Brightcove player (video player), camera robotics

Norway
Mobile camera robots

Sweden
Editorial system, design of virtual studios

Germany
Planning, construction, subtitling components

Switzerland
Wiring, subtitling components

Japan
Cameras and lenses

Spain

Hard- and software for virtual studios, audio-technology

Israel

Equipment for live reporting

Australia

Video hardware, subtitling components



«Ringier is trying something new, they're investing in journalism and creating jobs.»

Jonas Projer, Editor-in-chief, Blick TV

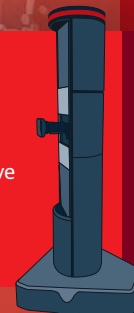
4 hands,

the technician's and the director's, are enough to produce Blick TV. These two people operate light, sound, cameras and camera robots, audio and video mixers and channels to on-location reporters.



5 camera robots

are deployed to produce the various programs. They move around on 40-foot tracks.



3,700 gallons of concrete

were poured for the studio floor. This quantity would fill 39 wine casks.



2 studios

were built for 17 daily hours of Blick TV.



More than 6 miles of wiring

was installed. That's enough to rappel down the Empire State Building 26 times.



1,100 square feet

is the size of the green screens in the two studios. They are filled entirely with virtual content.



More than 400 hours

of in-house training and further training were conducted.



4 virtual studios

were developed within some 300 working hours and modeled in 3D software.



11 on-location reporters

are out and about in Switzerland every day.



27 tons of rubble

were produced by the construction. That's roughly the weight of 25 Renault Twingos.



10.5 feet

is the ceiling height of Blick TV's newsroom. To achieve this, the existing floor was excavated by 12 inches and the ceiling by 13 inches. Now, the studio can accommodate an African elephant.



48 employees

work for the Blick TV's core team. Plus the journalists from the newsroom who supply Blick TV with material.



4.5 minutes

was the average dwell time in the first week of TV programming.



Some 400 hours

of programming were tested and piloted before Blick TV went on air.



840,000 viewers

were reached by Blick TV in the first week of broadcasting, i.e. one in six inhabitants of German-speaking Switzerland.



1,473 messages

with feedback about the new TV came in within the first week.



Studio and Garage

Since 1985, Paul Seewer has been taking photographs for Ringier. After 30 years as a «cellar dweller» at the Pressehaus, he now composes portraits of people and fashion in the middle of the Medienpark. After work, he turns into a mechanic – to restore vintage cars.

Photos: Paul Seewer, Privat

He has shot millions of photographs: Paul Seewer, 60, photographer for Ringier Axel Springer Switzerland. For decades, he worked in the basement of the Pressehaus on Dufourstrasse. «I was a cellar dweller,» he quips. It was only when the Ringier magazines moved to the Medienpark, after some 30 years, that he saw «the light of day», and now he takes photographs in the middle of the editorial office. The two or three years he originally planned to stay with Ringier turned into 35. «But so many new things happen here that I never had a reason to leave.» While Paul's demeanor is low-key, his life story is highly exciting. Born in the British town of Rugby (where the sport of the same name was allegedly invented), he got to know the world at an early age: India, Malaysia, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. His mother is British, his Swiss father is an engineer involved in the construction of hydroelectric power plants. «Until I was ten years old, I was always on the road with my family, and as a child I was often lonely.» When he was sent to boarding school (first Repton, later Henley), the experience was a shock to ten-year-old Paul. «That is a time I have no fond memories of.» At 17, his parents brought him to Switzerland. Paul went to a language school to improve his German, with dreams of becoming a stage designer. Upon discovering photography, he did an apprenticeship as a photographer and spent two years taking pictures of products for Interdiscount, a chain of appliance stores. In 1985, two former fellow apprentices brought him to Ringier – to the weekly Blick spinoff for women, «Blick für die Frau». Paul photographed people in the studio, shot fashion spreads, presented products in the proper light or arranged still lifes.

After work, Paul likes to get his hands dirty. That's when he passionately tinkers with vintage cars. He shares a garage with a colleague. It houses his four «treasures»: two Rovers (the P6 and SD1 models) and two Triumphs (a Stag and a Spitfire). As a child and teenager, he learned how to repair cars from his father. «For me, it's really just a hobby, I would never have wanted to become an auto mechanic,» Paul assures us. Because at heart he's too much of a shutterbug. **RH**



For once, Ringier photographer Paul Seewer steps in front of the camera (above). He started at «Blick für die Frau» 35 years ago, and posed with Silvia Affolter, Miss Switzerland at the time (left). In 1986, the amateur mechanic and motorhead took pictures of his MG BGT on the ramp to the Pressehaus parking lot.



Editor's Choice

by Marc Walder

Ringier CEO Marc Walder tells you which books he is reading and why they fascinate him.

Nicholas Lemann

TRANSACTION MAN

In his book «Transaction Man», Nicholas Lemann analyzes all significant developments of American capitalism – from the New Deal in the 1930s to the present. In particular, he examines the work of three personalities who played a decisive role in shaping their era: Adolf Berle, who saw a society increasingly dominated by large corporations, Michael Jensen, who championed the maxim of shareholder value, and LinkedIn co-founder Reid Hoffman, who banks on the fact that networks can rebuild our social fabric. Lemann interweaves these profiles with the history of the Morgan Stanley investment bank and the rise and fall of a working-class neighborhood in Chicago – which makes the reading experience lively. A book that forces you to reconsider what you think you know.

Wade/Macaulay/Noronha

ORCHESTRATING TRANSFORMATION

Despite all the efforts of corporate executives and despite the billions invested in digital transformation, the vast majority of organizational change programs fizzle out into nothingness. At least that is what the authors of «Orchestrating Transformation» claim. Still, they also provide recipes for how to plan transformation properly. These are based on a holistic view of organizational resources and how they work together to drive change synergistically. The book is packed with quantitative and qualitative insights derived from years of applied research and collaboration with leading executives around the world. As readable as it is instructive.



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