

ooo Ringier

DOMO

Reading along the dotted line.

This vintage Heidelberg press has been printing texts – white on white, in Braille – for almost 100 years. It is still in use at the Swiss Library for the Blind, Visually Impaired and Reading Disabled. A report on a media house that goes beyond what the eye can see.

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Dot by dot, Sound by Sound

A blind proofreader, a printing press for Braille, a professional voice-over artist who records audio versions of books and magazines: Welcome to the fascinating world of the Swiss Library for the Blind, Visually Impaired and Reading Disabled (SBS) in Zurich.

«Interest makes magic happen»

As diverse as the various Ringier companies are, a common vision is meant to unite them all: «We create interest in the world around you – and beyond.» Frank Dopheide from the agency human unlimited supported Ringier in the development of its Purpose and explains why it is more than a phrase.

A sporting feat!

Ringier Sports Media Group (RSMG) was founded a year ago and has already established a presence in seven countries with nine brands. Daniel Riedel interviewed Chairman of the Board Robin Lingg about the secret behind this sporting feat.

«Blikk is my second home»

In his 30 years with Ringier Hungary, Attila Fekete has designed more than 6,000 Blikk covers. The art director tells us which covers he will always remember and what it is about his job that excites him to this day.

Choose your truth

Publisher Michael Ringier reflects on a sloppy approach to facts and contorted conclusions in Swiss journalism.

Scoring points in text and sports

When you were a child, did you also have a secret code that only you and a friend or sister could decipher? Ym eman si Nirtak, for example. Writing backwards was, of course, the most banal form of encryption, which your peers – or worse, grown-ups – could instantly see through. I won't bother you here with the more complex ciphers for my erstwhile text distortions. I was reminded of all this while researching my report about the Swiss Library for the Blind, Visually Impaired and Reading Disabled, SBS (p. 6). During my visit, I peered over the shoulder of proofreader Thomas Moser. He was scanning the embossed points with two fingers. This is how he reads Braille texts for the SBS book production before correcting them on the computer with the help of various technical tools. By the way, there are several variants of Braille, which is based on six dots, that differ significantly from full Braille: a mathematics code, a music code, and a shorthand code. Thomas Moser learned Braille as a child, but you can't score the three-dimensional dots into paper by hand. «I would write my essays on a normal typewriter, but then I couldn't read through and correct the texts,» the proofreader says. A notion that would irritate sighted people.

A misplaced pass or a fumbled scoring chance are also impossible to correct, which sometimes drives professional soccer players and their fans to despair. These as well as happier sports moments are what the world of Ringier Sports Media Group revolves around. Just one year after it was founded, RSMG now numbers around 300 million sports fans. How Ringier came to enter the sports media sector in the first place and where the unit is headed is what Fibo Deutsch has reviewed and Daniel Riedel has inquired about, in his interview with RSMG Chairman of the Board Robin Lingg (p. 24). By the way: Blind and visually impaired people also engage in sports, using all sorts of aids. For blind jogging, for example, there are escorts. Chess, on the other hand, works with Braille symbols for each piece, which are as tactile as the board. Does that sound intelligible? Or more like a secret code? ●

Cordially,
Katrin Ambühl, Editor-in-chief DOMO





“Media have the power to educate, to shape people's minds.”

Quote by
Geena Davis

from her speech delivered at the EqualVoice Summit on June 6. For decades, this actor has been promoting women's visibility and rights in the world of film and media.

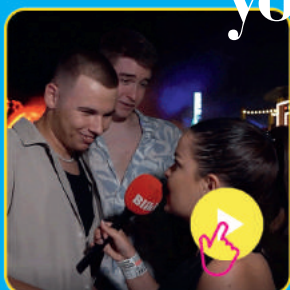
Win-Win

The jobs platform BrighterMonday Kenya has already won two awards in 2023: the accolade «Best E-Recruitment Platform» at the Kenya E-commerce Awards and the coveted Pacesetters Award (PSA). «In a country grappling with unemployment, we are determined to play our part in offering groundbreaking solutions that enhance the connection between employers and job seekers,» said Chris Otundo, CEO of BrighterMonday Kenya.



Sylvia Mbaabu (Partnerships Lead, East Africa) and Chris Otundo (CEO BrighterMonday Kenya) at the Kenya E-commerce Award ceremony in late June.

How loose are your purse strings?



A Blikk TV video went viral within a few days this summer. It was not about a scandal or a disaster but about a perfectly harmless topic. The TV professionals Petra Garai, Dániel Gyenes and Ádám Slemmer asked attendees of the popular Balaton Sound Festival in Hungary how much money they were spending on the event. Why was this video clicked more than 3 million times within a matter of days? Probably because of the unconventional questions and the fresh and cheeky exchanges with the respondents, who were looking forward to the music festival and gave effusive and uninhibited answers, which made the video appealingly unvarnished and honest.

8 Years

That is how long Romanian Iulian Ghergut was in the hands of jihadist terrorists. Ghergut was working for a mine in Burkina Faso when he was abducted in 2015 and taken to Mali as a prisoner. In August of this year, the hostage was finally released thanks to the efforts of the Romanian government but also due to a wide-ranging journalistic investigation. Three media professionals had tenaciously pursued this story and published their findings in various articles in the French magazine «La Croix» and the Romanian daily «Libertatea». After his release, the abductee's sister, Elvira Ghergut, said: «I am weeping with joy. I want to thank «Libertatea» and all the journalists who wrote about my brother.»

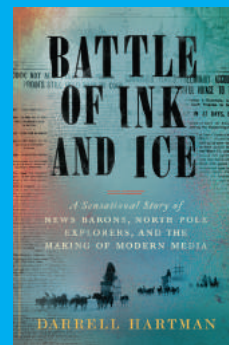
Honoring Defiance

Alexei Nawalny is paying a huge price for his fight for freedom and democracy. The Russian's prison sentence was yet again extended this year – willfully and for no legal reason. Now, Nawalny has been awarded the «European Prize for Political Culture» by the Hans Ringier Foundation. His son and his wife collected the award in Ascona (Ticino) on August 5.



From left to right. Zakhar Nawalny, Yulia Nawalnaya, Ringier commentator and President of the Hans Ringier Foundation Frank A. Meyer and former German President Joachim Gauck. (Portrait of Alexei Nawalny: Tania Jacobi.)

Recommended Reading



«Battle of Ink and Ice – a Sensational Story of News Barons, North Pole Explorers, and the Making of Modern Media», by Darrell Hartman

«What does a media house executive read on blistering hot summer days? Ideally a book about the media industry and lots of ice. There's no such thing? Yes, there is! During my summer holidays in Ticino and southern Italy, I read «Battle of Ink and Ice» – with great interest and amusement. The book recounts the almost 60-year saga of the first men to reach the North Pole, beginning in the late 19th century – a bitter struggle between glamorous hard-boiled Arctic explorers but also, and no less, among the ambitious publishers of the young nationwide media titles of the USA, who would stop at nothing to get scoops and reach a wide audience...»



Dr. Manuel Liatowitsch

Group General Counsel | Chief Legal Officer & Head Corporate Center
Ringier AG

DOT BY DOT, SOUND BY SOUND

Text: Katrin Ambühl | Photos: Simon Habegger



Our eyes are constantly at work and provide our most important gateway to the world. But when our eyes see little or nothing at all, fingers, ears and high-tech take over from vision. We experienced how this works at the Swiss Library for the Blind, Visually Impaired and Reading Disabled (SBS) in Zurich. This institution also produces books in Braille and audio versions of books as well as magazines. Tactile children's books, chess games or Sudoku are part of the offer of this somewhat different library.

Frayed outlines, blurry black and white images, utter darkness. This is how our environment appears to people with little or no vision. An unimaginable scenario for sighted people. But as we enter the world of the non-sighted, our eyes are literally opened to a world of the senses where ears and fingertips replace vision. It's a world in which the people we met deftly and casually find their way around. One of them is Thomas Moser, blind from birth. He is a proofreader at the SBS and reads stacks of books – not in inkprint, but in the dot-based Braille. He is currently casting an eye – or rather a fingertip – at a novel for young adults. Next to his computer are printouts in Braille, whose lines he scans with his finger at a brisk pace. His computer is equipped with two tools that replace vision: a voice assistant that reads Word documents or websites aloud, and a Braille line on which the letters of a text can be felt line by line. Once the corrections have been made, the

young-adult novel is printed in Braille in the company's own print shop and adopted into the SBS Braille library. The library's own books as well as books from partner libraries that may be borrowed by visually impaired people are stored in rotating shelves. One disadvantage of Braille books is that they require a huge amount of space. «The Old Testament in Braille would fill the walls of an entire room,» says Thomas Moser, who studied theology. He used to have many books in Braille, he says, but with the advance of digitization and for lack of space, he now has his entire library on his iPhone. Still, or perhaps because of that, he likes reading text in Braille. «It's a relief for our ears, which we visually impaired people use so intensively in everyday life,» he explains. Because just as sighted people skim-read, visually impaired people do so with their ears. Moser has the speech tool read out a text – at a dizzying pace. He grasps the content perfectly, while we hear nothing but gobbledygook.



Thomas Moser is a Braille proofreader at the SBS and an iPhone teacher for the visually impaired. He is also a singer and uses Braille sheet music to rehearse new songs.



On the left, in Braille, the book is ready for the final run of proofreading. Thomas Moser scans it with his finger and corrects it on the computer using a Braille line.

From voting documents to magazines

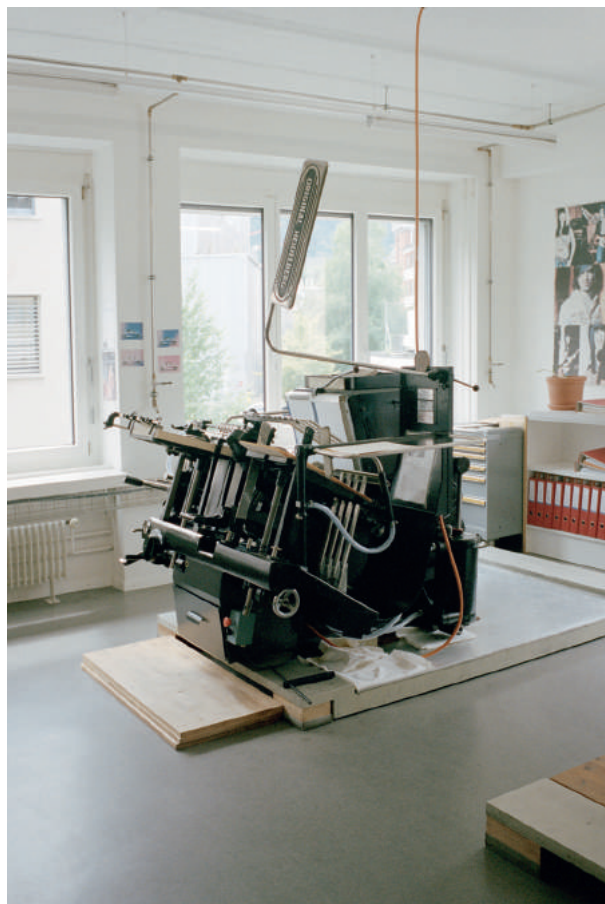
Users can also adjust the reading speed of the audio books produced by the SBS in its nine in-house recording studios. All recordings are made in the so-called DAISY standard, which offers accessibility to visually impaired people. This means that the speed of the delivery can be increased at will without voice distortion, individual chapters, as well as pages and sections, can be searched for precisely, or text passages can be bookmarked. More than 1,000 audio books and magazines are produced each year, with the latter mostly recorded at the home office of the respective speaker for reasons of efficiency. The selection includes some free magazines such as «D-Journal» (a periodical about diabetes) and paid subscriptions. In the latter category, Ringier's advice and service magazine «Beobachter», for example, is in 4th place. Other popular titles include the health magazine «Gesundheitstipp» and cooking magazines. In

addition to «Beobachter», «Schweizer Illustrierte» and «Bilanz» from Ringier Axel Springer Schweiz are also regularly recorded. The audio books, on the other hand, are produced in a total of nine SBS recording studios. This is done by around 100 professional voice-over artists who do this work as a sideline. In addition, German audio versions of many voting documents are also produced.

Audiobook studio production is costly, and one might think that recordings with human voices could easily be replaced by speech synthesis. However, if you listen to the professionals at work in the recording studio, it quickly becomes clear that the quality of human speech is quite different: it is sometimes empathetic, sometimes dramatic, and it has a lively rhythm as well as a warm sound, whereas synthetic voices sound mechanical and monotonous, at least for now. That is why few synthetic voices are used in the SBS's own productions.



Romolo Formicola, Head of Reproduction at the SBS, once did his apprenticeship as an offset printer at Ringier. Today, he is the master of the Heidelberg.



The Heidelberg, built in 1930, is a printing press for Braille texts. To this day, it is in use at the SBS for smaller print products.

Printed white on white

Romolo Formicola's domain is not about hearing but about touch. He is a printing professional who completed his apprenticeship as an offset printer at the Ringier plant some 40 years ago. He has been with the SBS for 18 years, and his work is not about colors or fonts, because his printed products are all white, but printed with the tactile dots of Braille. «It requires a special expensive wood-free paper,» explains the reproduction division manager. «On paper with wood components, the dots can be printed, but eventually they disappear.» Formicola's pride and joy is «his» Heidelberg, a shiny black vintage press that is obviously given tender loving care. The machine was built in 1930 and is still in good shape. «She's

part helicopter, part steam engine. All she needs is grease and oil,» he says of the machine, whose pins emboss dots into the paper with great force. When he started out at the SBS 18 years ago, the Heidelberg was used every day, nowadays it's in use about twice a week. Modern braille printers do most of the work. But in terms of quality, the original is still a notch above, Formicola enthuses. The printing process is leisurely with the old machine, which is still used for projects with print runs of 100 copies or more, such as the Braille catalogs of SBS. Books in Braille, however, are handled by modern presses that print the text in Braille on the basis of an electronic document. They produce about 600 sheets (front and back) per hour.



Irina Schönen is one of around 100 freelance professional voice-over artists at SBS who produce audio books in all genres.



Each year, some 1,000 books and magazines are recorded in the SBS's nine audiobook studios. Crime novels and cookbooks are audience favorites.

Braille dots are Formicola's business. As one of the SBS's sighted employees, he didn't have to learn Braille. «I can read Braille, but only with my eyes,» says Romolo Formicola. In addition to books for its own catalogue, the SBS also produces custom-made media, such as teaching aids, professional documents, flyers or annual reports. The SBS also lends out games, including crossword puzzles, Rubik's Cubes or Sudoku. «One day, I decided to solve a Braille Sudoku and took one with me on vacation. I tried really hard, but I couldn't figure out a single number,» Formicola frankly admits.

Braille was invented in 1825 by Louis Braille at the tender age of 16 years, after he had gone blind in childhood. Although there were and are other writing systems for the blind, Braille has gained international acceptance because it is simple, yet widely used. The script consists

of only six dots, arranged side by side in two columns, about the size of a fingertip. The dot combinations represent letters, punctuation and special characters. The same dots are also used for mathematical writing and Braille musical notation. The latter is also based on the six braille dots, but they have a completely different meaning for notes. A highly complex subject, which our man from the beginning of this story knows very well. Thomas Moser is not only a Braille proofreader and iPhone teacher for visually impaired people, but also a passionate musician who has performed at the prestigious KKL concert hall in Lucerne. But how is a violinist or a pianist supposed to feel notes if their fingers are used for the instrument? The proofreader smiles and simply says: «Fortunately, I'm a singer, the instrumentalists just have to learn all of the notes by heart.»



René Moser is visually impaired and has been working at the SBS for 43 years. He has been using the Perkins Braille for decades and does so to this day.



The Perkins is an old mechanical typewriter for Braille texts. It's like a ballpoint pen for the blind, René Moser explains during the demonstration.

Ballpoint pens for the blind

We also meet another Mr. Moser in the print shop: René Moser is an old hand at the SBS. He suffers from achromasia, which is why his vision is very blurred and black and white. He has been working at the SBS for 43 years, and you would scarcely notice that he has low vision. He shows us how visually impaired people can write a shopping list, a label or some other note in Braille on the fly. The secret is called Perkins Braille, a streamlined typewriter. He asks me to dictate a sentence to him, which he then types very rapidly. The result appears as a sheet with Braille dots. «This machine is like a ballpoint pen for

us,» says Moser, emphasizing that this is a practical supplement to voice notes that visually impaired people often make in everyday life. But if you want to label a jam jar or a wine bottle, speech tools are no help.

As a parting gift, I receive a Braille text and the Braille alphabet. Day after day, I try to feel the dots with my fingertips, to guess letters and assemble them into words. I ended up like Romolo Formicola and probably most sighted people: After a lot of practice, I was able to decipher the code at a snail's pace – but only with my eyes...●



Novels, mysteries or non-fiction books. The wide range of Braille books comes from the SBS's own production as well as from partner libraries.

Switzerland's Disability Discrimination Act dates back to 2004, and the federal government also signed the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2014. This convention affirms «all human rights and fundamental freedoms and the need for persons with disabilities to be guaranteed their full enjoyment without discrimination». Since this is a government mandate, the public sector provides about half of SBS's funding. The other half comes from donations, commissions and services. But the SBS as an institution is much older, exactly 120 years old. The founding father of the SBS was Theodor Staub (1864 – 1960), son of a silk manufacturer and blind at the age of seven. In addition to the headquarters in Zurich, there is a branch in Collombey for French-speaking Switzerland. The SBS is both a specialized library and a media producer and currently employs around 75 staff in Zurich, not counting the voice artists. Around 90,000 book titles are available for loan in various formats. The largest department is audio books and magazines in audio versions, which are released on CDs or SD cards or may be streamed. There are also large-print books produced by the SBS in the Tiresias font, which was specially developed for the visually impaired, in 17, 20 or 25 point type, with around 500 new titles per year, as well as tactile atlases, games, Braille books and sheet music. From 2010, the SBS expanded its products to the target group of people with reading disabilities, such as dyslexia.

“Interest makes magic happen”

Frank Dopheide and his agency «human unlimited» have specialized in consulting for companies on matters of purpose and has supported Ringier in this respect. The result: We create interest in the world around you – and beyond.

Interview: Nina Huber

Personal details:

Frank Dopheide, 60, is the founder of the purpose agency «human unlimited», based in Düsseldorf. «human unlimited» is the creative answer to management consultancies and Excel charts," according to the agency's website. Previously, Dopheide was spokesman for the management of the Handelsblatt Media Group and founder of the brand and strategy agency Deutsche Markenarbeit. In 2021, he published a book entitled «Gott ist ein Kreative, kein Controller» (God is Creative, Not a Controller) – a guide for management to get out of the «efficiency trap.» He is the father of three children and lives in Düsseldorf.



Frank Dopheide, what is a Purpose?

Not an undertaking with a commercial purpose! Purpose is something like one's «inner drive», and it becomes palpable when something moves me and causes me to take action. Depending on the intensity level of how important something is to you, you might also call it a matter of the heart or what inspires you.

So, it's about emotions?

In the business world, everything is geared for profitability: The business of business is business. In the process, everything that is not primarily in the service of efficiency has been abolished: emotionality, sensitivity, persistence, significance. Leadership in the style of Noah: «Après moi, le déluge!» When it would be so important to make room for these things, because they provide the energy people need to rise above themselves – and that also goes for companies.

The demand for a sense of purpose in one's everyday job is often said to originate with Generation Z. Isn't it more of a general trend that employees demand this from their job?

I agree, civilization has evolved. A hundred years ago, everything was a matter of survival. People got married for existential reasons. Later, the concept of work-life balance emerged: People would work just enough so they could nicely arrange their spare time. Now, we are witnessing a leap forward in civilization: we see that things in the world are not going right. We don't want to fritter away our lives pointlessly but do something to make things better. This change in society also affects employers: If you don't offer something meaningful, you no longer have a chance of finding good people. In the future, no one will work just for the money.

Simon Sinek wrote a book about this called «Start with Why». The purpose of any enterprise must be established at the company's foundation.

Did you know that the father of meaningfulness was not Simon Sinek but the Austrian psychiatrist Viktor Frankl? He survived four years in Auschwitz. After he was liberated, he wrote a book entitled «A Man's Search for Meaning» (German title: «Trotzdem Ja zum Leben sagen»), a reflection on his time in the concentration camp from a purely psychological point of view and with the quintessence that humans need meaning in order to survive. This also applies to companies.

Ringier has existed for 190 years. Why should we adopt a Purpose now?

Most companies have a business model and no purpose when they are created. It used to be different, when there were real «needs». And that's why it's a great advantage that Ringier is so old, because we can look back on those days with a different perspective and revive that entrepreneurial spirit. Back then, a media company or a print shop served social cohesion, because people wanted to share information, stories and experiences.

Nowadays, providing information is no longer enough.

No, because there is far too much of it. The problem today is that people stay in their bubble, they collect the facts that substantiate their opinion. And this is where a media company once again has the task of building bridges, but not by means of information, but by generating interest. If we uphold interest in the world around us and beyond, we have a societal task.

Ringier's purpose is: «We create interest in the world around you – and beyond.»

Can you explain further why the creation of interest is so central to Ringier?

«Interest» comes from Latin inter esse, which means to be in-between, to be in the thick of things. Not on the sidelines, but in the middle. When I am interested, there is more energy in the room, my attention is heightened because I want to participate. At that moment, something magical happens in the brain, neurons form: matter in the mind is created out of nothing. This is the precondition for my own point of view to change. Interest is always positive and based on a basic appreciation of another person.

You have written a book: «God is Creative, not a Controller». All the chapters end with learnings, for instance: «The great goal is not a number.» What is it instead?

The insight that it's not about what life has to offer me, but what I can offer the world. Once I know that, I have a full life. And how do I find out what that is? The road sign is joy. It shows me the way.

At the end of the day, is it about your job being fun?

The question is: What do I like to do? And not just: What am I good at? That brings us back to the beginning of our conversation: When something moves me, I feel an inner drive. And when that happens in a company like Ringier with thousands of employees, it has a huge effect. ●



There's this short scene in the intro. We've already seen yellowed video footage of the life of a wealthy family: boys in suits, pools and ponies. Then, almost at the end of the opening credits, an elephant at an amusement park galumphs through the frame. There are children sitting on its back in a carrier frame being vigorously shaken with every step. They shake in time with the ominously lilting theme tune that will wind its way deep into your ears over the course of the four seasons of «Succession».

This elephant is the perfect symbolic image for Logan Roy: New York multimillionaire, media mogul and father of four children, Connor, Kendall, Roman and Siobhan, nicknamed Shiv. Logan not only gives his offspring a good shaking. He also tramples all over them and plays the game of his own succession with them, the rules of which are fluid and probably not always clear – even to him. Or indeed superfluous, as death is not an option for men of his stature.

When British screenwriter and television producer Jesse Armstrong pitched the idea for his series in Los Angeles, he would half-ironically sell it as «Festen meets Dallas», as he wrote in «The Guardian». Both models are recognizable. Time and again, the camera wobbles and derails in this otherwise consistently composed, curated luxury world. We prowl through Manhattan's most expensive apartments and opulent homes, lounge in helicopters and private jets, and travel to Europe over and over. For a wedding in Tuscany, a holiday on a superyacht in the Mediterranean – but also for business meetings with a

Swedish tech giant. As a company, Waystar RoyCo not only has the succession to deal with; its television stations also constitute a fundamental problem for the future.

Feuding offspring

Within this setting, the series delves deep into the unpleasantly human. Logan Roy's entourage, above all his four children, are brimming with psychological vacuity and disturbance. Their father has given them immeasurable amounts of money but no guidance for life. They picture themselves at the helm of the corporation or even as the next U.S. president, but they don't know what work is. They do, however, hold a black belt in meanness and cynicism.

The realization that filthy rich people have just as many, if not more, problems than we do may feel comforting. As does the dissection of universal family structures. The fact that «Succession» is so much fun, however, is primarily due to the excellent acting and the finely crafted characters. The dialogues, which are often quite long, are little fireworks that one enjoys watching twice in a row. Simply because they are so, pardon my French, fucking well written. By the way, the characters in the «Succession» universe are particularly fond of saying the F-word. Jesse Armstrong and his team of writers are said to have deployed it 2,071 times in the first three seasons alone.

In May, the fourth and final season of «Succession» was released on HBO. In Switzerland, it streams on «Sky Show».

The Global

Tech &

Data

Unit

The Global Tech & Data Unit processes enormous amounts of data with the objective of providing users with a customized, committed and secure user experience in the media, marketplace and advertising ecosystem. This unit provides state-of-the art tech services to all Ringier subsidiaries worldwide. In its first years, the GTU developed a purposeful strategy, opportunities and services in cooperation with the local business areas. Now, its focus has shifted from development to scaling the respective innovative solutions while supporting the local differentiation.

The Global Tech & Data Unit was created in 2019 and now numbers more than

100

staff. It is active in four locations: Switzerland, South Africa, Mauritius and Poland.

Every month,

40

million users are served with AI-generated recommendations to improve their user experience.

Ringier processes more than

1,000,000

Terabytes of data to continually improve our web and app solutions.

The unit offers more than

40

products and services for the areas of user engagement, advanced data analytics, personalization & recommendation, systems for content aggregation & distribution, on-line marketplace platform solutions, micro services and cybersecurity.

Equipped with security tools that track and spot flaws in internet systems, the unit currently has more than

100,000

systems in 19 countries under surveillance.

The GTU's offers are implemented in a total of

19

countries.



TEAM

Interview: Katrin Ambühl | Photo: Thomas Meier

Tackling the Federal Wrestling Festival and open-air festivals or coming up with sweepstakes for the Blick group, the nine employees of Brand Partnerships Switzerland. Their unit is divided into two teams: Media Partnerships and Events, which handles the Blick brands' brand partnerships at various events, and the Content Promotion team, which is in charge of all the sweepstakes on the Blick channels and the new content commerce platform «Box by Blick», which daily presents the best e-commerce deals and product news. Marcel Koller, Head of Brand Partnerships, tells us what his team is working on and what the highlights were in 2023.

Image: f.l.t.r.: Patricia Fischer, Anja Steinmann, Marcel Koller, Nicole Cordey, Dominique Zeier, Larissa Jurczek, Reto Vogel, Sandro Kolbe, Tatiana Schwarz.



WORK

What does your work consist in, and would you call it a dream job?

We never get bored, because each project is unique and gets individual attention. Whether it's the pajama deal on «Box by Blick», the Frauenfeld Open-Air or the Federal Wrestling Festival: our world of topics is diverse and represents all of Switzerland. We are a well-honed team with different characters that complement each other perfectly. Dream job? Definitely!

But surely there are everyday routine tasks, too. What are they?

Of course, we also have those. They are part of every project. Be it the briefing, the interaction with our internal services or the invoicing. But as we are a unit that contributes to the overall sales target of the Blick Group, even invoicing is fun.

Tell us two highlights among the events you've worked on.

Given the abundance of our projects, it's hard to limit ourselves to just two events. It doesn't do justice to our huge portfolio. But if we were to pick out two very current and individual projects, we would mention the Frauenfeld Open-Air and the Blick gala screening of the new «Barbie» movie. At the Frauenfeld Open-Air, we implemented a presentation tailored to a young target group.

We focused on the needs of the young festival visitors: entertainment in between the hip-hop highlights with table tennis, Subsoccer, slacklines and selfie mirrors. But also, a chill zone with deck chairs, sunshades and an attractive competition. In cooperation with Warner Bros. Entertainment, Blick organized Switzerland's first screenings of the new «Barbie» movie for users and invited guests. At this all-pink event, guests were treated to sushi, sweets and drinks at The Studio. The lucky participants, who had got their tickets via a raffle on the Blick channels, were spoiled with pink drinks, Blick and Barbie cupcakes in the cinema, and we surprised them with an additional competition.

What are highlights from Blick Sweepstakes department and how do you actually come up with the games?

Many sweepstakes result from media partnerships. These bring us tickets and prizes, which are then raffled off to our users. In addition, we maintain a large network of partners with whom we constantly implement new ideas for individual sweepstakes. Whether it's an overnight stay at a hotel, a new e-bike or a VIP ticket to a blockbuster soccer match, we give away prizes worth around one million Swiss francs a year. By the way: some 40 percent of all registrations on [blick.ch](https://www.blick.ch) are due to the sweepstakes. ●

Ringier Group

A
selection
of images



Blick, Switzerland. Photo: Sven Thomann

Wimbledon without the (retired) maestro of tennis? Unthinkable. At this year's tournament, Roger Federer did not play on the Centre Court but he was invited into the Royal Box. Here, the great sportsman was feted in style by Catherine, Princess of Wales, as well as his wife Mirka (at right) and his mother Lynette (behind him).

Beobachter, Switzerland. Photo: Midjourney

An assault on the Federal Palace in Berne? Yes, but this picture is a fake. It was commissioned for an article on Artificial Intelligence by Florian Wüstholtz and Gian Signorelli using the following prompts: «An angry mob with Swiss insignia and flags assaults Switzerland's Federal Palace (...) the police deploy tear gas to keep the mob in check.»





Bilanz, Switzerland. Composition/Photo: Valentin Jeck

When this iconic model was conceived in 1931, it was designed for polo players: rectangular and unbreakable. Since then, Jaeger-LeCoultre has developed more than 50 different movements for the Reverso. This model, priced at CHF 14,700 in this style, was selected by the business monthly Bilanz for its «Portfolio of eternal classics».



Libertatea, Romania. Photo: Vlad Chirea

The flower pilgrimage is one of the most important events for the Orthodox Christian community of Romania. This picture was shot on April 8 in the Old Town of Bucharest, where priests and believers processed from the Radu Vodă monastery to the Patriarchal Cathedral.



Schweizer Illustrierte, Switzerland. Photo: Kurt Reichenbach

Not only paintings but furniture, jewelry and shoes are among the 870,000 objects stored in the Collection Centre that have one thing in common. They are of importance to Switzerland. «We preserve the past here,» says Markus Leuthard, director of the Collection Centre in Affoltern am Albis near Zurich. Like the National Museum Zurich, the Centre is part of the Swiss National Museum. At right is Denise Tonella, the director of these two institutions.

Blikk, Hungary. Photo: Péter Zsolnai

The National Athletics Center is a new architectural landmark in Budapest's cityscape. This sports stadium, which holds up to 35,000 spectators, hosted the World Athletics Championships in August. The picture was shot in July during a training session on the long-jump facility.





A sporting feat!

One year, nine brands, seven countries. Since its foundation in summer of 2022, Ringier Sports Media Group (RSMG) has been wowing millions of sports fans all over Europe with its offers. Chairman of the Board Robin Lingg tells DOMO where the group stands after 365 days – and where it is heading.

Text: Daniel Riedel

They clinch more deals than Polish soccer star Robert Lewandowski does in the opposite team's penalty box, even when somebody tries to trip them up. The Ringier Sports Media Group, founded in summer of 2022, has made a name for itself as a key player in the contested market of sports coverage over the last twelve months. This is thanks to its team of seasoned media professionals and sports journalists, cutting-edge digital publishing solutions and the drive to become one of the world's leading providers in the sports media sector. «Nevertheless, we're a long way from achieving our goal,» says Robin Lingg, Chairman of the Board of Ringier Sports Media Group. «If you want to compare our development to a soccer match, we've been playing all of ten minutes – but the score is already 2:1 in our favor. And yes, we've had a pretty good start and celebrated quite a few successes.»

Their winning strategy: focusing on and expanding into several key markets. With branch offices in Bulgaria, Portugal, Serbia, Romania, Hungary, Slovakia and Greece, they are able to specifically target various sports communities.

State-of-the art technological solutions – such as the Sportal365 Content Management System – allow them to provide sports fans with all data in real time. This is

complemented with compelling content including talks with sports pundits, interviews, sports coverage and video. «Live broadcast rights aren't even our main focus,» says Robin Lingg. «We try to win users over with our complete offer. This comprises video as well as talks, exclusive info and background. We would like to become the fans' first port of call, their Home of Sports.» That is also

Sometimes I am acting as a coach, a scout or indeed as the Chairman.»

**Robin Lingg, RSMG Chairman
of the Board**

why they have deliberately invested in the British-based LiveScore Group – the leading European score service. And this overall package is already attracting 300 million sports fans to one of the nine sports media brands in seven countries.

With the Portuguese cult title A Bola, Ringier Sports Media Group has recently also added a classic print product to its portfolio. Is that a good fit? «A pretty great one, actually,» Robin Lingg replies. «In Portugal, every child knows A Bola, its brand name recognition is unique, and this acquisition will really open doors into the Western European sports market for us. We are aware, of course,



Within one year only, Ringier Sports Media Group built up nine sports brands in Bulgaria, Portugal, Serbia, Romania, Hungary, Slovakia and Greece. More than 300 million sports fans all over Europe use these brands' products.



RSMG Chairman of the Board Robin Lingg (6th from left), and Stilian Shishkov (5th from left), Senior Partner RSMG, with their international team.

that we still have a lot of work ahead of us in terms of workflows and brand presence.»

In his position as Chairman of the Board, Lingg sees his role as going beyond that of an outside investor. «I am constantly traveling these countries, sometimes acting as a coach, a scout or indeed as the Chairman. Always in the certainty that I can rely on a wonderful team that acts as a hub, orchestrating the technology and the contents, creating ideal presentations for our users with local experts and capable of accurately assessing the customs and the demands in the respective countries.» For the daily business, this means: In addition to the great click-drivers like soccer, ice hockey and tennis, more marginal sports such as futsal in Portugal, basketball in Serbia or even water polo in Greece may be of enormous importance to the coverage.

Being a sports fan himself, Lingg sometimes also turns into a classic topic editor. «I once told our colleagues in Greece about Alexander Ginnis, who was the first skier to score World Cup points for Greece. The story about him is still one of the most widely read items on sportal.gr,» Lingg smiles.

To ensure that the phones of the staffers at headquarters aren't always ringing, Ringier Sports Media Group is bank-

ing on expertise in the local markets. «We have quite a few former athletes in management positions. For one thing because of their excellent networks, for another because they bring the necessary ambition and joy to competitive areas of business.» And so, the former Bulgarian soccer star Stilian Shishkov is one of the Senior Partners at Ringier Sports Media Group. He and his Sofia team drive the expansion forward, and he always has an eye out for new possible markets and partnerships.

Which brings us to the question whether this plethora of sports doesn't eventually make him fed up with round balls. «Not at all,» says RSMG Chairman Robin Lingg. «I'm interested in countless sports, even though I try to spend more weekends with my family than in a sports arena.» Exceptions prove the rule: «I am a passionate fan of Lucerne's soccer club, and I try to follow their matches live, no matter in what remote corner of the world I am and what time of day it happens to be.»

And who knows, maybe his club will one day play in the same world-class league as Ringier Sports Media Group. Lingg promises: «We are still a long way from our goal, and we keep analyzing markets and opportunities – to see what is going on and where our expertise and our passion for sports would make it worth our while to pounce.» After all, a soccer match lasts 90 minutes. At least. ●

LIVE

Soccer and television are like sex and love: Join the two, and you multiply your pleasure. Soccer is everything: luck, misfortune, glamour, pain, emotion, money, lots of money. Only live broadcasts can make the thrill of victory or defeat accessible to a wide audience around the world. On December 18 of last year, 1.5 billion soccer fans from every continent watched the penalty shootout between Argentina and France at the World Cup in Qatar on television. Lionel Messi defeated Kylian Mbappé by 4-2 goals. Live is life!

This is the story of how Ringier helped bring live soccer into Swiss living rooms 25 years ago. And how German media mogul Leo Kirch and Ringier in Zurich got into business together when it came to soccer. Ringier was subsequently able to produce live National League A (later Super League) soccer matches for its broadcast window on Kirch's TV channel Sat.1 Switzerland. Back then, the public broadcaster Swiss National Television (SF DRS, now SRF) underestimated the importance of live soccer, doubted the appeal and profitability of live coverage, and mostly broadcast summaries of soccer action on weekends.

The scoop with the live matches for Sat.1 was made possible thanks to good connections and a soccer-crazy team. The linchpin in the soccer business was Munich media entrepreneur Leo Kirch. This son of a winegrower was one of the first people to recognize the value of movies and sports for television entertainment. In the years between 1950 and 2000, he forged the largest German media

group of the post-war period from a multitude of holdings: with TV stations such as Sat.1, Pro7, Tele5, sports-rights agencies, production companies, film distribution and a 50-percent holding in the Axel Springer publishing house in the print media. To his credit, he brought theatrical movies and live soccer to

THE TEAM

Sat.1 Schweiz was a good stepping stone: Almost all the team's employees moved to leading jobs in television after the Sat.1 adventure ended: Benno Zimmermann became Head of Production at Teleclub, presenter Roman Kilchsperger went on to Teleclub successor blue Sport, Head of Sports Christoph Roost joined FIFA Strategy, Marco Castellaneta, 1997 Head of the Editorial Team, was recently appointed new Commissioner of the Arts of the Canton of Lucerne, Marc Görtz, Head of RingierTV, now produces successful shows for SRF with his company MediaFish, presenter Pascale Menzi joined SRF – and more.

television, which also helped commercial television and pay TV establish themselves. From 1992, he secured the TV rights to the Bundesliga for eight years, and the sports program «LiveRan» on Sat.1 soon gained a cult following.

In Zurich, Leo Kirch had a major stake in Europe's first pay-TV channel, Teleclub, which operated movie theaters in six Swiss cities as well as offering feature films by subscription. Film and television – that was Kirch's world. I first met Leo Kirch at a meeting of the Board of Directors as a representative of Ringier, which also had a 20 percent stake in Teleclub. The media mogul, shrouded in mystery, struck me as surprisingly open, very approachable, very likeable. In Germany, he had the reputation of being a shy, gruff eccentric who avoided any contact with the media as much as possible. The more I had to do with him because of the soccer business, the more my respect grew, also because I saw him increasingly suffer-

ing from the consequences of severe diabetes, losing his eyesight and his mobility, and eventually becoming dependent on a wheelchair.

Along with the TV rights for the Bundesliga, Kirch secured the broadcast rights to Italian, French and Spanish soccer in the nineties, which he marketed in subscription pacts on his pay-TV channels, first under the name Teleclub Deutschland and later as DF1 and Premiere. And so, it made sense to include the Swiss National League A in the offering. However, there was a problem: The German Sat.1 programming was picked up in Swit-

zerland via satellite by cable network operators, who delivered it integrally to households. Understandably, the Swiss soccer association demanded that its games be broadcast separately in Switzerland. Without TV, stadium advertising and shirt sponsorship had less value. Kirch and Ringier resumed a project that had already once been rejected by Switzerland's Federal Council in 1994: a broadcast window with Swiss programming and advertising on the German commercial channel. Back then, Federal Councilor Adolf Ogi stopped an application by Sat.1's competitor RTL at the eleventh hour to protect the public broadcasting corporation SRG's new second German-language channel «S plus» from foreign competition. The prospect of live soccer and Ringier's involvement may have made the Federal Council change their mind four years later: On June 22, 1998, Berne suddenly granted Sat.1 Schweiz AG a TV broadcast license with a firmly defined mandate «as a window on the channel of the German



IS LIFE

program, consisting mainly of live broadcasts of National League A soccer matches.» Ringier's Rincovision, later RingierTV, provided editorial services and production. The first match to be broadcast in the window was the Sion (Valais) vs GC (Zurich) match on Sunday, August 2 at 4 p.m. A year later, the Federal Council expressly approved the marriage of Ringier and Sat.1 Germany, namely a 50 percent stake in Sat.1 Schweiz AG.

Success lent us wings: Ringier soon supplemented the live matches with the daily sports news show «täglichRan» and other broadcasts in the time slot before 8 p.m. The collaboration with Sat.1 ended in 2008. In 2006, the complete TV rights for the 1st Football League went for the first time to Teleclub, which is now owned by the telecom company Swisscom and called «blue Sport». Today, blue Sport broadcasts all matches live, with public channel SRF broadcasting one match by arrangement.

For me, the absolute highlight in the association between soccer and Ringier was the 2002 World Cup Korea/Japan – a crazy story. Kirch's sports-rights agency Infront in Zug sold the TV rights for the 2002 and 2006 World Cups worldwide on behalf of FIFA. All the surrounding countries had already signed contracts for 2002, the Kirch people told me. Only Switzerland was hesitant, saying that a price beyond ten million for 64 games was too expensive for them. Later, I learned that SF DRS Head of Sports Urs Leutert had managed to beat the asking price down to eight million. Still too high. SRG Director General Armin Walpen and Media

Minister Federal Councilor Moritz Leuenberger intervened. Armin Walpen (75) confirmed to me: «Switzerland had not qualified for this World Cup. So, Leuenberger and I were of the opinion that one could do without producing Swiss coverage and save money.» Leutert remained on the fence – but now, Kirch was fed up. He

LIFE AND DEATH

Leo Kirch first made money in 1956, when he used borrowed funds to buy the original TV rights to the film «La Strada», starring Giulietta Masina, in Rome for 20,000 marks and reselling them at a profit. In the 1990s, he ran into financial difficulties due to heavy investments in soccer rights and pay TV. Banks drove him into insolvency and bankruptcy in 2002 by publishing tendentious reports. In protracted lawsuits, he and his heirs fought for compensation of around one billion euros. He did not live to see the final verdict in 2014; Leo Kirch died on July 14, 2011, at the age of 84.

called me, spoke of making an example, and awarded all rights exclusively to Sat.1 Switzerland for 3.5 million francs – a steal. That meant SRF was only allowed to broadcast 30-second snippets from this World Cup every day but no live coverage. Urs Leutert (69), who went on to head SRG's general Business Unit Sport for 18 years until 2015, told me at the time: «For me, World Cup reports are part of the basic calories of sports reporting. This kind of mistake will never happen to me again.» Things got even better: Sat.1 in Munich made their Bundesliga LiveRan studio available to us for the daily supporting program to the 64 live broadcasts with presenter Roman Kilchsperger and his colleagues. Swiss International Air Lines, the successor to Swissair, which had been grounded a year earlier, regularly flew Swiss soccer experts, fans and celebrity guests back and forth between Zurich and Munich. The final match on June 30, 2002, which Brazil (Ronaldo) won 2-0 against Germany (Rudi Völler), was watched by over 1 million

soccer fans on Sat.1 Switzerland – despite the coverage of the same match on Germany's public broadcaster ZDF.

I tried to find a conclusion on the topic of the symbiosis of soccer and television. And I found no better expert than a man who has given two lives for it: one for television. And one for soccer:

Jürgen Doetz, 79. He worked as managing director for Leo Kirch at Sat.1 for 20 years and, until a few years ago, he was chairman of the Association of German Commercial Broadcasters. In addition, he was Vice President of the Bundesliga club FSV

Mainz 05 for 30 years. In response to my question, he told me – sounding thoughtful: «The greatest risk in soccer, the most important secondary matter in the world», and its connection with television is over-commercialization. When even a corner kick is cause for a commercial break, the sport is doomed.»

This has been a look at the past, at the origins, when electronic media opened up new dimensions for sports. Today, Ringier is taking digital sports media into new independent business areas, as evidenced by the separate article on Ringier Sports Media Group (p. 24). ●

Fibo Deutsch (83) worked for Ringier for over 65 years in various positions as a journalist and member of the Group Executive Board. In terms of television, he represented Ringier's interests on the boards of ZüriVision AG, Tele Züri AG, Teleclub AG and Sat.1 Schweiz AG.

“BLIKK IS MY SECOND HOME”



Blikk's newsroom in Budapest is art director Attila Fekete's second home.

Attila Fekete has been with Blikk for as long as this newspaper has existed: 30 years. As the art director, he is responsible for the front pages of this Ringier Hungary daily. To date, Attila Fekete has designed around 6,000 covers. In our interview, he told us more about the beginnings of Blikk, about the most emotional moments of his working life and about his professional and private passions.

Interview: Katrin Ambühl

Attila Fekete, before you joined Blikk in 1994, you had worked for a weekly paper and for magazines. Why did you decide to stay with a daily newspaper?

Working for Blikk was and is very exciting, as some of the topics are the same as in magazines, such as the regular columns or the service section, but the daily news from sports, politics and society presents us with new challenges every day. For a graphic designer, it's a huge challenge to make the newspaper exciting for readers by means of the cover, over and over again.

How do you remember your first day at work?

The first month was a period of getting to know each other and learning. We produced the new newspaper completely in-house in the editorial and production office in Budapest. This was new, because it used to be the print shops that implemented the ideas and articles of the newspapers. That was an intense learning curve, in which we were also supported by Swiss colleagues.

It used to be that front pages were pasted together like collages and the work was much more manual. Today, everything is done digitally. Hasn't your passion for this job suffered as a result?

No, the passion is still the same, because the planning and brainstorming takes place in your head and especially in the exchange with the editorial team; it is a creative process. Technology merely helps us implement our ideas more efficiently.

Over the past 30 years, editors-in-chief have come and gone; you stayed. Wasn't that difficult at times?

Maybe those changes were easier because the new editors-in-chief came from within the team. And they knew me and appreciated my work, my professionalism and my experience, which was a nice feeling.

Printed newspapers are increasingly coming under pressure.

How do you deal with that?

Yes, the situation of printed media is difficult everywhere. I don't think it's impossible to hold our own alongside online media. We should perhaps look more closely at the reasons why readers still buy paper newspapers, albeit less so. I am convinced there is still a place for printed media.



The Blikk cover after the death of Lady Diana in 1997 is one that the art director will never forget.

The success of a cover is measured by the sales figures of the respective newspaper.

Which was your biggest success? Unfortunately, it was the tragic death of Jimmy Zambo, a Hungarian singer: the sales figures were astronomical ...

Which covers will you never forget?

The cover with Diana's fatal accident. We made full-size posters of this cover and put them up at night in the most important places in Budapest. And, later, the cover with 9/11, where we had followed the news about this incredible terrorist attack with bated breath.

What does your work environment mean to you?

Blikk is my second home. I have spent a lot of time with my team over the last 30 years. There are some colleagues with whom I have been working for over 20 years.

Newspapers are your business. What about your private news consumption?

I'm not sure if you can call me a big news reader, but the fact is that I'm constantly looking at what's happening around me and in the world. I read local newspapers and news websites. I also check out foreign magazines like «Bild», «Blick», the «Sun» or the «Daily Mail», translate what I find exciting and send it to my colleagues who might be able to use the information.

Blikk aside: What are your personal passions and hobbies?

My wife and I love hiking. Especially the National Blue Trail, which runs across Hungary and is part of the European Long Distance Walking Route. Right now, we don't hike much because we have a new family member: Scotty, a four-month-old Golden Retriever. We are spending a lot of time in dog school with him. Hopefully we will be able to go on hikes with him soon ... ●

Choose your truth

A sea change has begun at Ringier. No, I'm not talking about Artificial Intelligence, the Metaverse or an acquisition. This is far more serious. «The Ringier media house is flirting with the right wing.» This, at least, is the diagnosis of a journalist published in various regional newspapers in Switzerland. To me, this journalistic fantasy is an occasion to frame some thoughts on the topic of Swiss media journalism – or rather, the remains of it still kicking around.

What made the journalist come to this conclusion? After all, Ringier has never been right-wing or left-wing – only and always journalistic. Our commentator Frank A. Meyer had recently written in a «Schweizer Illustrierte» column that the Swiss People's Party (SVP) was useful and an important pillar of democracy – even though he is normally very critical of the positions of this right-wing conservative party and its father figure Christoph Blocher. Adding to that was the fact that my wife and I visited Christoph Blocher's very impressive art collection and I did an interview with him about it – as one collector speaking to another.

This, then, was enough to make up the thesis of a change of mindset. As the Zurich daily «Tages-Anzeiger» recently wrote: «They interpret the facts according to their liking, link them with speculation and spread various conspiracy narratives.» This assessment, however, did not refer to that

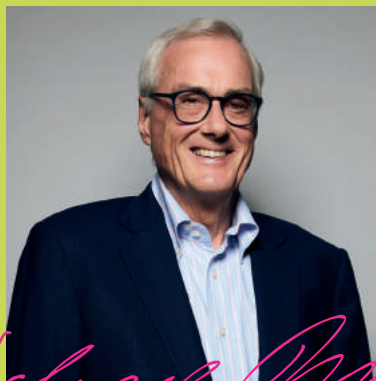
regional paper in Switzerland but to an online TV portal in Austria, where anti-vaxxers and hard-right wingnuts promulgate their theories.

It isn't only provincial journalists who forget the rules of the trade when writing about colleagues or competitors. The so-called beacon of quality journalism from the business metropolis of Zurich is no better: The Neue Zürcher Zeitung (NZZ) calls Marc Walder, our CEO, an «opportunistic executive craving recognition and an unjournalist», a blowhard and an ambitious favorite in need of harmony and trusting in authority, who personally pocketed part of the investment that the insurance company La Mobilière made with us. This is utter nonsense and also defamatory. I cannot remember reading anything like this in the «NZZ» about another Swiss CEO.

What prompts journalists to abandon all the standards of their trade as soon as they are dealing with their own industry? Why is there only one remaining serious media journalist in German-speaking Switzerland, who – of all things – writes for a publication known for taking a rather idiosyncratic approach to objectivity and fairness? Why is it that – with the exception of a few industry services that try to maintain a fairly factual approach – only homeless hacks who would never be accepted by any editorial offices or windbags from the gerontology department of obscure blogs ever write about media?

Sadly, one can't play the «things used to be better» card here. Anyone who remembers the Swiss rag Klartext (Plaintext) knows that, even 40 years ago, malice and emotionality were poisoning the pens of media journalists. The fact that publishers invest less and less or nothing at all in media journalism has, of course, hardly helped the situation. One telling answer may be found in a poll conducted by the media magazine «Schweizer Journalist», where colleagues can vote for the Journalists of the Year. Almost every year, the editor of Inside Paradeplatz, a spiteful blog from Zurich, is among the front runners. The desire to bring down one of the so-called mighty or at least kick them in the shin appears to be a wish that many journalists are secretly nursing – not an ideal premise for factuality and fairness. Or, as the editor-in-chief of the German weekly «Der Spiegel» put it years ago at a dinner: «Wearing the scalp of the BDI (Federation of German Industries) on your belt is a badge of honor for any editor-in-chief.»

PS: I have written exactly one letter to the editor in my entire life – decades ago. An NZZ critic had reviewed a play I'd seen. Her text brimmed with spite and stingers against the actors. I swapped the names of the actors for names of NZZ journalists and asked whether the paper would have printed this text, too. The letter was never published... ●



Michael Ringier

Michael Ringier, Chairman of the Board of Directors Ringier



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Urs Fischer, 50/50, 2002.

“Even before it was hung, and was just leaning against a wall, this picture attracted me like a magnet. And once expertly hung, it was like love at first sight. Ceiling and floor, whose colors echo the sky and the earth, not clearly separated or defined by lines, so the room appears to be floating in mid-air. And then there's this door strikingly dominating the center of the painting that makes you wonder whether someone is about to emerge from it, or if it is invitingly calling and beckoning you. The door has no lock, it looks as if it might lightly and quietly swing to and fro in the wind. The general mood is very peaceful and open, provoking curiosity. Everything is floating, the red wire is reminiscent of the pliability of vine tendrils. In addition, there is the dove, peaceful and striving upward towards freedom. The wallpaper full of texts from poems and quotations and well-hidden among them a nude female figure. All of it like faded memories in a person's life. You don't know exactly what it's supposed to mean. When I pass by, it keeps provoking me to look anew, and each glance raises loads of unanswered questions...”

Haralabos Balalis has been working at Ringier for 12 years. At the Zurich Pressehaus, he is head of the reception and security team. In his position, he not only sees people coming and going but also keeps discovering new artworks, when they are exchanged every few years.