

**Zeitschrift:** Swiss review : the magazine for the Swiss abroad  
**Herausgeber:** Organisation of the Swiss Abroad  
**Band:** 15 (1988)  
**Heft:** 3

**Rubrik:** Mosaic

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Andrea Pfister, shoe designer of the year

## Large size in shoes

He did not shed tears of emotion. «But my eyes did water», says Andrea Pfister when he recalls the greatest moment in his career. On 8th February 1988 in the Carnegie Hall, New York, the Fashion Footwear Association of New York elected him as shoe designer of the year.

Born in 1942 in Pesaro, near Rimini, Andrea Pfister grew up in Wohlen in Canton Aargau. Today he lives in Vigevano, the shoemakers' Silicon Valley, a town of 100,000 inhabitants some 20 miles south of Milan. According to his passport, Andrea Pfister is Swiss.

His family lived for generations in Italy, and it was not until 1945 that his parents, Cäsar and Elsa Pfister, together with their daughters, Barbara and Christina and son Andrea, came to Switzerland, to live in Wohlen. His father worked as a representative for Italian makes of shoes – and he loved antiques. «My father was always buying», Andrea recalls with a smile, «he never sold. Sometimes we had nothing to eat but then we lived in the midst of lovely things.»

The family spent Sundays in museums and art galleries. The fine arts fascinated the boy more than the dull routine of school. «I was a marvellously bad pupil», says Andrea Pfister, more pleased about this

today than he was then. Twice, he dropped out of the district school in Wohlen, until an apprenticeship with the straw hat factory of Jacob Isler in Wohlen put an end to the school drama. Language study in Florence followed.

When he was nineteen, his father sent him to Milan, to the Sutoria Design School. Andrea Pfister wanted to be a shoe designer. Three months later he came back from Milan to Wohlen with a diploma and started to help his father in the business.

In 1962, a letter from Amsterdam turned up at home. Andrea Pfister should take part in an international shoe competition. He designed a high-heeled shoe of reddish brown suede with a bow to tie it. «I'd long forgotten the whole thing», he recalls, «until two months later I was told I'd won the first prize.»

Then Andrea got a job with the designer team at Bally, the shoemakers in Schönenwerd, canton of Solothurn. This «guest» appearance lasted all of two months. «The whole atmosphere didn't please me at all», he still groans about it today, but, as a free-lance, he stayed faithful to the House of Bally for two years.

Then, years of apprenticeship and travel as a journeyman led

Andrea Pfister all over Europe. As a free-lance shoe designer, he got orders from factories and tanneries in Germany, Italy, England and Austria. In 1962 he moved to Paris where for three long years he created new models for the *haute couture* houses of Lanvin and Jean Patou.

At 23 years of age he set up on his own in Paris, calling his range of shoes «Andrea Pfister». In 1968, together with a partner, he bought a shoe factory, with an adjacent residential building, in Vigevano, where today shoe buyers from all over the world come to visit him. The roomy, sunlight-flooded atelier on the first floor of the house serves as workplace, showroom and sale-

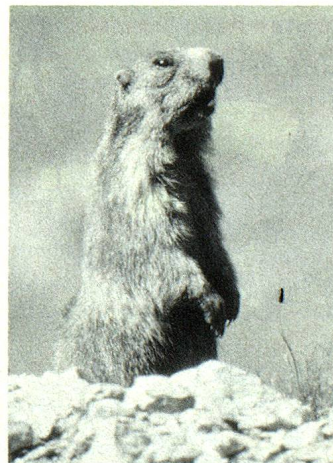
room. The new winter collection for 1988/89, comprising 250 models, is sorted according to colours and is easy to view and examine. Models already taken out of the current collection – some 500 shoes – are piled up in a higgledy-piggledy shoe mountain on the floor. Coloured reptile skins are stacked up in cardboard boxes, and sketches of shoes are stuck on the walls.

In addition to shoes, Andrea Pfister designs a few exclusive accessories such as foulards, hats, bags and stockings. Today he has an annual turnover of SFr. 1,500,000.

*Lilith Frey (abridged from «Schweizer Illustrierte». Photo: Willy Spiller)*

## Beloved marmot

The natural history museum of Canton Grisons has organised a touring show on the Alpine marmot, to be seen in several other museums in Switzerland from summer 1988. Simultaneously, Desertina Verlag of Disentis has published a richly-illustrated brochure which shows how well adapted the marmot is to its habitat, the high-altitude alpine pastures. Earlier observations as well as the latest research findings draw a complete picture of our popular rodent. (photo: Thomas Jucker)



## Focal point sun

Swiss researchers have devised a highly-sensitive measuring instrument for solar observation, which, from July 1988, has been part of the equipment of the Soviet space probe «Phobos». Only about the size of a shoe box, the instrument was designed and built at the Davos Physiometeorological Observatory with financial aid from the Swiss National Fund for Scientific Research.

## Congress of Dual Nationals

The 2nd European Congress of Dual Nationals, organised by the IAS (Community of Interests of Swiss Women married to Foreigners), took place in Zurich in June. Representatives (both men and women) from seven western European countries met to discuss the legal and social position of mixed-national couples and families. All the countries reported a disquieting trend towards tightening-up of legislation directed at foreigners and increasing xenophobia on the part of the public.



## Successful Gotthard Museum



Switzerland's youngest national museum, which can also be described as Europe's highest-altitude museum, is barely two years old. It shows in graphic and vivid fashion the history of the Saint Gotthard Pass and the influence of this lifeline on culture, tourism, politics, the military and the economy. In the picture, a photo of a car in the snow gorges, taken shortly after a summer opening of the Pass in the 1930s (from this year's special exhibition: «Snow Conditions and Snow Clearance on the Pass of Passes»).

## Abounding in inns ...

With its 28,829 cafés, inns and eating places, Switzerland is the best-off country in the world for restaurants. But the trade has to contend with an acute shortage of staff. Some 15,000 qualified personnel and around 6,000 occasional workers are wanting in the businesses affiliated to the Swiss Innkeepers Association.

## ... and insurances

According to the Federal Statistics Office, expenditure on insurances forms the largest item (16.1%) in the household budget of Swiss wage and salary earners.

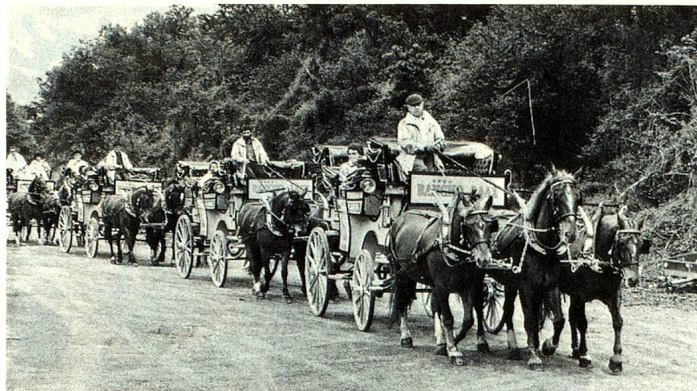
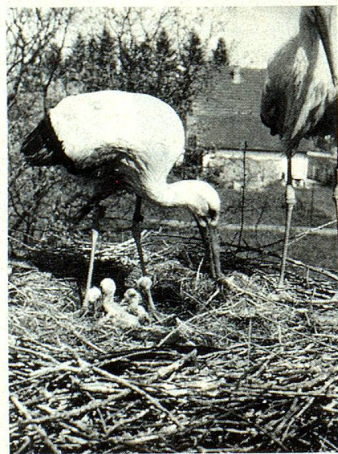
## International «Swiss» triumph

Switzerland won the *Grand Prix Eurovision* in Dublin with the song «Ne partez pas sans moi». The hit was sung by the young French-Canadian, Céline Dion (centre), composed by Attila Se-reftug (left), a Turkish national who lives in the Grisons, and the text was by the Ticinese, Nella Martinetti (right). As Bernhard Thurnheer commented on the Swiss television: «The Canadians have pulled our chestnuts out of the fire as they did in ice hockey.»



## Storks in Switzerland

The stork colony in Altreu, Solothurn, celebrates its 40th birthday. The settlement was founded by teacher Max Blösch to resettle storks in Switzerland, which at that time seemed to be dying out. His efforts were not in vain: today, the stork population in our country, at almost 800, has again reached the level of the year 1900.



## «Grand Canyon Express»

A new Swiss Federal Railways attraction: the SBB now run four stagecoaches daily from Coire to Laax through the impressive Gorge of the Vor-

derrhein, one of the main headwaters of the River Rhine in Switzerland. (photo: Hugo Stamm)

## Yodelling boom

Swiss yodellers have no worries about up-and-coming young talent. The Federal Association numbers some 21,500 members. Last year, a good 1,000 beginners (by no means only old

codgers) practised the national singing. In Zurich, for example, the holiday course organisers of the teaching schools were almost overloaded with 10-13-year-old yodel-happy youngsters.

## Homesickness – an illness?

Do you get homesick? For Switzerland, for example? This «continuous fever with deep anxiety and longing beyond all expression»? Don't let it worry you. As the Basle professor of medicine, Theodor Zwinger (from whom the above definition of homesickness comes), diagnosed in 1703: «Most Swiss are prone to this disease.»

### Nostalgia

Whereas homesickness is today generally regarded as a form of depression, during the course of the history of medicine the most varied explanations have been sought for nostalgia, a name for another widespread «illness». The name first appeared in a doctoral thesis by Johannes Hofer who was later to become the town doctor of Mulhouse;

indeed, it was he who created the scientific term: «nostalgia».

### Air pressure difference

At the beginning of the 18th century the Zurich doctor, Johann Jakob Scheuchzer, tried to explain homesickness physically by claiming that the cause lay in differences in air pressure. Since the Swiss lived at the highest altitudes, they would *ergo* feel unwell in lower regions. At first, the naturalist and poet Albrecht von Haller accepted this theory but he later rejected it when he heard that an inhabitant of Schaffhausen feels ill in Berne, although Berne lies higher than Schaffhausen. But the view that homesickness is not specifically Swiss gradually gained acceptance. JM