

CAMILLE GRAESER



Born in Carouge, Switzerland (1892 - 1980)

Curriculum Vitae

1907

Year of the foundation of the Deutsche Werkbund. Graeser starts a four-year joinery apprenticeship with Karl Myer. He paints and draws in his free time.

1911 - 1913

Admission to the furniture and interior design course at the Königliche Kunstgewerbeschule in Stuttgart. Internships as draftsman in furniture factories in Stuttgart and Bamberg. 1913 admission to the master class for furniture and interior design taught by Bernhard Pankok.

1914 - 1916

First noteworthy works of free and applied art. Visit to the artist colony Mathildenhöhen in Darmstadt and of the first exhibition of the Deutsche Werkbund in Cologne. Starting in 1915 attendance of lectures by Adolf Hölzel which exert a strong influence on him. From 1916 on Graeser uses Hölzel's method of "guiding lines and grid systems" not only for his paintings but also for interior designs. In the winter of 1915/16 a brief stay in a "spatial art studio" in Berlin. Contacts with Herwarth Walden's avant-garde gallery Der Sturm. First futuristic-cubistic drawings. In late 1916 return to Stuttgart.

1917

Opening of his own studio for interior, graphic and product design in Stuttgart which remains open until 1933. During that period he designs, in addition to interior furnishings and individual pieces of furniture, decorative fabrics, carpets, wall paper, packaging, book covers, window displays and shop furnishings.

1918

First Solo exhibition in the Kunsthaus Schaller of cubistic paintings and drawings as well as interior design projects. Admission to the Deutsche Werkbund.

1919

Private drawing lessons with Adolf Hölzel. Friendship with contemporary artists and Hölzel students such as Willi Baumeister and Oskar Schlemmer. Joins the newly founded Üecht Gruppe which brings together innovative artists over a quarrel concerning the succession of Adolf Hölzel at the Kustgewerbeschule.

1920 - 1922

Until 1922 participation in competitions and exhibitions in Stuttgart. First non-representational ink drawings and gouaches.

1924

Participation in the Werkbund exhibition „Die Form ohne Ornament in Stuttgart. His article „Möbel- und Zeitbedürfnis“ is published in the magazine Innendekoration. Designs for carpets and a wall paper collection. Graeser designs his own printed papers as well as commissions in the elemental typography style.

1925 - 1926

1925 solo exhibition „Innenarchitekturen und Graphik von Camille Graeser“ in the Stuttgart Landesgewerbemuseum. Study trip to Paris to see the „Exposition Internationale des Art Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes“ where he is impressed in particular by the Pavillon de l'Esprit nouveau. 1926 the article „Rationelles Wohnen“ is published in „Haus und Wohnung“, a special supplement of the „Stuttgarter Neues Tagblatt“.

1927

On the occasion of the Werkbund exhibition „Die Wohnung Graeser“ shows the model interior design for a two and a half room apartment in Mies van der Rohe's building in the Weissenhofsiedlung in Stuttgart. For this project he also designs two carpets. The work connected with the Weissenhofsiedlung leads to contacts with important representatives of „Neues Bauen“ such as the brothers Rasch, Richard Herre, Richard Döcker and Alfred Roth. Graeser now is considered one of the leading interior and product designers in Stuttgart.

1928 - 1929

1928 design of a reception room and ballroom in the newly built Hindenburgbau in Stuttgart. Interior design solutions for private clients follow. Between 1928 and 1932 Graeser designs furnishing fabrics for a firm in Bielefeld, wall paper collections for a firm in Breisach and several carpets.

1930

Visit to Paris to see the exhibition Société des Artistes Décorateurs and to Strassburg to see the leisure centre Aubette whose interior has been designed by Theo van Doesburg, Hans Aro and Sophie Taeuber-Arp.

1932 - 1933

1932 Graeser takes part in the Werkbund exhibition Wohnbedarf, Typ und Standard with the design for the furnishing of an interior space. He designs again furniture for private clients; some of the pieces are reproduced, possibly serially, for the furniture store Das Stuttgarter Haus.

1933 - 1936

Due to the precarious political and the difficult economic situation Graeser gives up his studio in Stuttgart and moves to Zurich. To establish himself anew as an Interior designer turns out to be difficult. Only a few interior designs for private clients materialize. After applying without success to furniture stores in Zurich he becomes a free-lance collaborator of the interior designer Robert Hartung. 1936 marries Emmy Rauch, the couple moves to an apartment in the Stadelhoferstrasse which Graeser furnishes with his own furniture.

1937 - 1938

Growing dedication to painting. First concrete oil paintings and concrete wood reliefs. Graeser joins Allianz, an association of modern Swiss artists. 1938 takes part in the first Allianz exhibition Neue Kunst in der Schweiz in the Kunsthalle Basel and in all subsequent exhibitions of the association which will exist until 1954. Meeting with Hans Arop and Sophie Taeuber-Arp.

1939 - 1942

Enters a sculpture competition for the Schweizerische Landesausstellung 1939 in Zurich and a competition for the ornamentation of the façade of the Zurich Kongresshaus - both without success. Joins the Swiss section of the Freunde der Internationalen Kongresse für neues Bauen (CIAM). From 1940 until 1942 he is drafted into auxiliary military service.

1943 - 1945

Return to creative work. Graeser starts to paint five to seven paintings a year. Shows for the first time with other Allianz artists in the Zurich Galerie des Eaux-Vives, where his work will be shown until 1946 at least once a year. First dynamic pictorial solutions and progressively arranged additions of forms. On the occasion of two competitions held by the Schweizer Modewoche in 1943 and 1944 return to the design of decorative fabrics and dress materials. He produces more than a hundred brightly coloured textile designs based on geometric shapes. 1945 becomes member of the Schweizerische Werkbund.

1947 - 1951

Represented for the first time in exhibitions abroad (Italy, France, Germany, USA). Graeser now is considered one of the most consistent and most interesting concrete artists in Switzerland. He develops constructions with bars and loxodromic compositions with which he wants to show structural and formal analogies between music and art.

1951

First solo exhibition of Graeser's paintings in the Galerie 16 in Zurich (eleven oil paintings with titles from the terminology of music). Graeser also designs the invitation to the exhibition.

1952 - 1954

Since 1952 until at least 1954, possibly longer, co-operation with the firm Burgauer & Cie, Zurich. Realisation of his textile designs for foulards, square silk neckerchiefs and scarves. Contact with Friedrich Vordemberge-Gildewart and Julius Bissier. Becomes a member of Gruppe SW, an affiliation of the Südwestdeutsche Ausstellervereinigung Stuttgart.

1955 - 1958

First success in selling paintings at his solo exhibition in the Club Bel Etage in Zurich. Art experts like Willy Rotzler and Hans Curjel encourage him, active art collectors support him by buying works. 1956-7 polychrome aluminium relief for the conference room of the administration building of the Aluminium-Industrie AG, Zurich. 1958 aluminium wall relief for the Café City in the Zweierstrasse in Zurich. Participant in the 29. Biennale di Venezia. Graeser develops at first vertical, then also square pictures of stripes, which he calls "Relationen" and which remain his most important motif until the mid-1960s.

1961 - 1964

Participates in a twelve-week poster art action in Zurich, initiated by the Basel artist Karl Gerstner, 1964 first retrospective in the Kunsthaus Zürich, together with Johannes Itten. Proceeding from Translokationen by moving parts of forms to neighbouring fields.

1965

Appearance of the first screen print. More than seventy prints made using this technique follow, among them three series. 1968 Fridolin Müller publishes in the Niggli-Verlag the first Graeser monograph with a text written by Eugen Gomringer. 1969 Graeser participates in the 1. Biennale von Nürnberg and represents Switzerland at the 10. Biennial of Sao Paulo. Beginnig of a continuing succession of commercially successful exhibitions at home and abroad.

1970 - 1976

Graeser produces his first public commission in Switzerland: a monumental wall design with colourful aluminium elements in the main hall of the post office Zurich-Enge. 1971 participates in the exhibition The Swiss Avant Garde in the New York Cultural Center. 1972 testimonial award from

the Kulturkredit des Kantons Zürich. 1975 art prize of the city of Zurich. 1976 retrospective in the Westfälisches Landesmuseum für Kunst und Kulturgeschichte, Münster and the Kunstmuseum Düsseldorf.

1977 - 1980

Invitation to the documenta 6 in Kassel and appointment to honorary membership of the Staatliche Akademie der Bildenden Künste in Stuttgart. 1979 retrospective (with Max von Moos) in the Kunsthaus Zürich and in the Wilhelm-Hack-Museum, Ludwigshafen am Rhein. Publication of the Graeser monograph by Willy Rotzler.

1980

Camille Graeser dies on February 21st in Wald, Kanton Zürich, after a lengthy illness.