

OOO Ringier

# DOMESTIC

## Up close and personal with Uncle Sam

What makes America tick before the presidential election? Our reporter looks for answers in the swing states and at the parties' national conventions.

Corporate Magazine  
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## «We want more clicks, but fewer CO<sub>2</sub>-emissions»

What does the environmental footprint of an online medium look like? Gergely Tóth Császár, Head of Business Unit at Ringier Hungary, wanted to find out, and made an online carbon footprint survey of blikk.hu and glamour.hu.

## A feast for reporters

Soon, the USA will elect their new president. America expert and head of the Ringier School of Journalism Peter Hossli embarks on a road trip through the swing states and visits the National Conventions in Milwaukee and Chicago.

## Two green thumbs and a big heart

Samuel Beljean is a gardener with passion. He has been looking after the park surrounding the Villa Römerhalde, seat of the Ringier School of Journalism, in good shape for many years.

## «Is there hope for democracy? I don't know»

Peter Bárty, editor-in-chief of Aktuality.sk, talks about the difficult relationship between politics and media in Slovakia and about his tireless fight for press freedom in his home country.

## Abracadabra

AI experts Miriam Meckel and Léa Steinacker presented their book «Alles überall auf einmal» (Everything everywhere at once) at a Ringier event. It is an instructive piece of literature, but it also offers entertaining stories about the first attempts at using the precursors of today's technology.

# Roadtrip to a parallel universe

Take off into a different life, a different reality or a different time. Escaping your workaday life into a dream world can sometimes do you good, even if your flight of fancy may end with a rough landing. But what if we had to struggle simultaneously in several worlds? If an overwhelmed single entrepreneur suddenly became a superwoman putting an end to evil? Only to go on to play a different role in another universe? That is what happens to Evelyn Wang in the movie «Everything Everywhere All at Once». The protagonist is on the verge of a nervous breakdown, because of her laundromat, her daughter, her IRS audit. But suddenly, she is catapulted into parallel universes, where she solves her earthly problems – in a rather different way. The movie is a fantastic rollercoaster, absurd and fascinating.

The authors of the book «Alles überall auf einmal» («Everything Everywhere at Once») were obviously also taken with this film. Léa Steinacker and Miriam Meckel, both of them proven entrepreneurs and experts on AI, have written about the infinite range of artificial intelligence, the metaverses of the future, as it were, in which we may soon be living. With just as much pace, intensity and creativity as the movie, they examine artificial intelligence from various perspectives (S. 34).

Peter Hossli, head of the Ringier School of Journalism, also traveled to different worlds for his report on the American presidential elections: Together with photographer Nathalie Taiana, he took a road trip through the contested swing states (S. 12–15). He investigated, traveled, talked to people in barber shops and diners or at the parties' national conventions in Milwaukee and Chicago. He wrote and transmitted the results at high speed to Zurich to Blick's headquarters. «It's like keeping five balls in the air,» this expert on the USA says in his report for DOMO, in which Democrats and Republicans speak their mind, people with very different values and opinions, who seem to be living in different universes. And all of this at the same time, almost like Evelyn Wang in «Everything Everywhere All at Once». ●

Yours truly,  
Katrin Ambühl, DOMO Editor-in-chief



# A great commitment to democracy

In Ascona (canton of Ticino), first-rate representatives of the worlds of journalism and politics gathered in early August: The Castello del Sole hotel hosted the Dîner Républicain, a yearly event at which the Hans Ringier Foundation's «European Prize for Political Culture» is awarded. This year, the prize went to the married couple Anne Applebaum and Radosław Sikorski, and the eulogy was given by Christian Lindner, Germany's Federal Minister of Finance. «Anne Applebaum and Radosław Sikorski are shaping the debates of our time and thus also the political culture in Europe. They are standard-bearers of the free world. For this, they deserve the European Prize for Political Culture 2024, our thanks and our great respect,» he said in his laudation.



Seated, from left to right: host Frank A. Meyer, Anne Applebaum, Radosław Sikorski, Poland's Minister of Foreign Affairs, hostess Lilith Frey, eulogist Christian Lindner, Germany's Federal Minister of Finance. Standing, from left to right: Eric Nussbaumer, President of the Swiss National Council, Maja Hoffmann, President of the Locarno Film Festival, Viola Amherd, President of the Swiss Confederation, Mircea Geoață, NATO Deputy Secretary General. Photo: Philippe Rossier

## Recommended viewing or reading



«Shōgun» is a regular on bestseller lists – time and again, since its publication 50 years ago. «Shōgun» is currently a hit series on Disney+, but this classic book had previously been adapted in the 1980s. This 1,000-page novel written by James Clavell was a big part of my youth, its thrilling insights into Japanese history and culture opened up a new world for me and I was fascinated. In his book, the author essentially recounts the historical experiences of the British navigator William Adams, who reached the shores of Japan in 1600 in the service of a Dutch trading expedition and died a samurai in 1620. Whether as a book, a classic mini-series or a current series, «Shōgun» is unmissable!

Enjoy this unique reading or viewing experience.



**Kilian Kämpfen**  
Chief Technology & Data Officer (CTDO) and  
Member of the Ringier Group Executive Board

## Quality First



«Name a daily publication that, in your opinion and according to your personal preferences, has the highest level of quality in the Serbian market.» That is the question put to 1,200 people over the age of 18 and active on the internet, on behalf of QUDAL (short for QALity med-AL). The result was clear: The gold medal went to Blic. This Serbian publication is therefore considered the most trustworthy media brand and the most popular daily title in Serbia. Congratulations, Blic!



# Best of the first ten years

The Swiss TV guide «TV Land und Lüt» is turning ten. For its anniversary, the editorial team rifled through the photo archive and compiled the 15 best pictures for «Wunderland», a special supplement of this monthly magazine. These spectacular photos, from an alpine marmot to a pygmy mouse, are a treat for all animal lovers.

Scan the QR code and dive into this wonderland.



## Politicians! Don't kill the Polish media!



Publishing companies' copyrights have come under pressure with generative AI, and this is also the case in Poland. The country's lower house of parliament recently rubber-stamped an amendment to copyright law, even though it contained no directives regarding AI and intellectual property rights. 350 media companies protested against this decision, including RASP. In a coordinated effort, they published black front pages with the above-mentioned quote on all their channels. The campaign was a success: in July, the House of Lords and the Senate approved the copyright amendment proposed by the media companies.

## Good news for the writing trade

Two years ago, 13 students began their training at the Ringier School of Journalism, aka Jouschu. They were the anniversary class, because their graduation coincided with the Jouschu's 50th year. On June 27th, all of these up-and-coming talents were awarded their diplomas at Villa Römerhalde in Zofingen. In the course of their training, they were taught by some 100 lecturers, gained insights into every journalistic genre and got the opportunity to work on the editorial teams of Ringier's own publications such as Blick, Beobachter, Schweizer Illustrierte or Handelszeitung. In addition to this, they interned with other media companies. Our heartfelt congratulations and all our best wishes for a successful future!



Above, from left to right: Yara Vettiger, Sara Belgeri, Vanessa Nyfeler, Noemi Hüssler, Janik Leuenberger, Robin Bani, Samuel Walder, Lea Oetiker, Anja Schäublin, Lena Madonna, Jouschu head Peter Hossli. Below, from left to right: Nicolas Horni, Joschka Schaffner, Nicola Abt.

# “We want more clicks, but fewer CO<sub>2</sub>-emissions”

Our digital lifestyle produces no waste, uses no materials and is clean. Really? What does the environmental footprint of an online medium actually look like? Gergely Tóth-Császár, Head of Business Unit at Ringier Hungary, wanted to find out. By the way, our interview via video call caused approximately 40-70g of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.

Text: Katrin Ambühl



Gergely Tóth-Császár is a sought-after speaker on the topic of the digital carbon footprint. The Head of Business Unit at Ringier Hungary has been working on this topic since 2020.

**Gergely Tóth-Császár, you spoke about CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and digital media during the Ringier Green Week. Honestly, I was shocked by several of your statements. For example, that we should avoid sending mere thank-you emails. Isn't that a bit extreme?**

Yes, this is an extreme example, which I intended to illustrate how much we can have an impact on the environment in a way we don't even think about. I don't think we should limit or completely dismantle social interactions and gestures, but we should be aware that every single digital activity creates emissions, even a thank-you email.

**Most people have probably never heard that digital media consumption, social media activities, film streaming, etc. have consequences for the environment. How did Blikk Hungary come across this topic so early?**

In 2020, we – as a media company – started to review our own publishing activities as a media company because we felt that the most important thing was to be aware of ourselves: the emission of our operation as an enterprise. At that time, the focus was on publishing operations and print product production, but the ESG survey revealed that our digital carbon emissions can also be significant and it is also worth paying special attention to. We saw that with digital media production, it is one thing to operate or produce articles, but if you look at the traffic, then there can be very different orders of magnitude, which somehow you have to understand, measure, control and do everything to minimize the emissions of that. So, we have also started a new process to launch an online carbon footprint survey of the blikk.hu website.



### **Why did you not decide simply to compensate for the emissions, as it is done in aviation for example?**

We believe that compensation is not the best answer when we can do something to eliminate the real cause. Therefore, we decided to collect data, measure and then look for ways of reducing the emissions.

### **You opted for the hard way, so to say, and before the actual case study could be made, there was a time-consuming pre-evaluation.**

We knew that all the data was available, but the first question was what methodology to apply and how we could do an actual carbon footprint calculation. We found a professional partner, Carbon Crane, and with their support and methodology we were able to assess the footprint of online activity in a really transparent and understandable way.

### **Then, throughout 2023, data were measured for blikk.hu. What surprised you most during this process and in the results?**

As a leading news site, we knew that many articles were published on a daily basis on our site. But we were not aware of the fact that energy consumption for one article can rise and rise depending on traffic on the website and clicks on the article. So, the most striking thing was the multiplier and its effect.

### **Can you briefly explain the «multiplier effect»?**

The multiplier effect means that the writing of an article and its output is not

large in itself, so the page load of an article is not a large output. But if an article is read by many people, it will have to be loaded not just once, but hundreds of thousands of times, on different devices, so at the end of the day the output of a very successful article can be very large, since the traffic multiplier effect magnifies the output of the article, the single URL.

### **But reducing traffic, or clicks, is bad for the business.**

Nobody in media wants to reduce traffic! We want more clicks but fewer emissions – and luckily there is a solution for this.

### **According to the study, the CO<sub>2</sub> emissions at blikk.hu are about the same as 900 return flights from Budapest to Zurich. A shockingly high number, how come?**

Yes, it surprised us too. But when you look at the fact that Blikk.hu as the leading news site in 2023 had 433,000 active URL pages and a total annual traffic of more than 310 million page views, this high number is understandable.

### **What measures do you intend to take to reduce emissions at Blikk.hu?**

In a first step, we will improve the technological conditions and the system based on them, such as the CMS system, in order to reduce and manage what can be done at the system level and in an automated way. One of the big areas will be image management and image optimization. After that, we will also review the code and scripting, and after that, we will

also adapt the editorial workflow to incorporate this experience and knowledge into the day-to-day operations of the editorial team. So, it's very important that all articles and URLs are created in such a way that we strive for the smallest possible output, so that we can be sure that the traffic impact is minimized as much as possible.

### **What consequences did the study have for the editorial team?**

In any case, the lessons learned from the study and survey will be incorporated into the workflow, because at the end of the day it will not only help to minimize emissions, but also SEO and SGE aspects that can help to keep the sites stable and sustainable in the short and medium term.

### **What impact does the increasing use of AI tools like ChatGPT etc. have on CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in digital media consumption?**

That's a very good question. I suppose there is already an incredible amount of emission involved in inventing, creating and continually developing the LLM models themselves, without looking at the emissions during usage on a daily basis. I have not seen such a study, but I assume we are talking about very large orders of magnitude.

### **How has this issue influenced your personal behavior?**

Even before this experience I was particularly receptive to sustainable solutions in my private life and work, but after the outcome of the survey this became



Together with the pioneer Carbon.Crane, Ringier Hungary began measuring the digital CO emissions of blikk.hu in 2023.

even stronger. It has made me even more mindful of what I do and how I do it, in my everyday life. I try to pay attention not only to how I get around, where I shop, what I eat or what choices I make in my daily life, but I also try to pay attention to my digital activities with this same awareness and thoroughness. I think it's an important path and direction for everyone, and everyone needs to move forward or improve themselves day by day.

**How can blikk.hu benefit from this pioneering work?**

Everyone is talking about sustainability, and for us as a company, it is essential to get involved in this area. And the topic of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and digital footprint is also part of this. I do think that our pioneering role in this young topic and our commitment can bring Ringier Hungary not only an image boost, but also economic benefits. ●

**Does Blikk also report on the issue of digital media and carbon footprint, and how is this received by the public?**

We wanted to become fully aware of our emissions before we wanted to write about this subject transparently and reliably for the public. However, we have talked about it in the B2B media and at various B2B events and conferences, and it's been met with a lot of openness and interest. Everywhere, everyone has responded that this is a very important field and that they are happy that we are drawing attention to it and that we are addressing it and perhaps opening everyone's eyes a little bit so they can think about it in their own operations. But we are still at the beginning of the journey, looking at it from a media perspective.

Ringier Hungary was the first Hungarian media company to start measuring and subsequently reducing the CO<sub>2</sub> emissions of its online publications in the summer of 2023. The efficiency of blikk.hu was measured first, followed by measurements at glamour.hu in early 2024. An authentication logo has been displayed on both sites informing users that the sites are measuring and monitoring their own carbon footprints.

The partner in the case study of Blikk.hu's CO<sub>2</sub> emissions was Carbon.Crane, a pioneering company in the field of digital media use and its environmental impact. György Huszics, managing director of Carbon.Crane, explains the basic problem: «Every click on a website generates data streams between servers, which in turn involves high energy consumption and thus CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. The same applies to email traffic, marketing campaigns and the use of all digital technologies.» Measuring the environmental impact of a single website is complex and time-consuming. But once the emissions have been assessed, how can they be reduced? «By reducing the number of large visual elements, optimizing their size, using system fonts, and tweaking program settings, we can do a lot to reduce the energy used to load web pages,» says Huszics.



# “Life itself”

**Beobachter magazine's advice hotline has been operating for close on 25 years. Karin von Flüe, a lawyer and attorney, joined the team at the very beginning. Apart from her expert knowledge, working the phones requires a very different skill set.**

**Text: Barbara Halter | Photos: Paul Seewer**

**I**t is Wednesday, a few minutes past nine a.m. The phone lines are already abuzz with the first clients. It seems as though life's pressing problems require a resolution early in the morning. Karin von Flüe, 61, dons her headset, peers at the two monitors in front of her and accepts one of the calls: «Beobachter advice center, good morning.» The woman on the line sounds stressed. She owns an apartment that she does not live in, and now, her neighbor has had a water pipe installed in the house without her knowledge and given her a contract to sign. She is out of her depth, the woman says. «I have two little kids and a job, I don't have the time to deal with this kind of problem.» Karin von Flüe listens. She explains that it's a case concerning water transfer rights, and that the neighbor is trying to use the contract to secure her easement after the fact. «Don't let him pressure you,» von Flüe says, advising her to hire a lawyer and offering to send her a list of names. The woman sighs at the mention of a lawyer and thanks for her help.

The next client has just been through a divorce. Basically, everything has been settled, but he suspects his ex-wife of concealing assets. These include a private pension fund as well as objects in their formerly joint residence, such as the refrigerator. «You'll need a lawyer for this, but a lawsuit will be difficult.» Karin von Flüe's answer sounds certain. Next up is an elderly woman whose daughter has fallen gravely ill with Alzheimer's, but she is not getting any information about the patient's condition. And then, Karin von Flüe has a housewife on the line asking whether she is obliged to put all the money she has earned on the side into the household budget. Around ten o'clock, the subject of housing comes up again: A woman who owns a row house is annoyed about her neighbor who wants to install a photovoltaic system on the adjoining roof.

#### **Advice by phone is a big hit**

A mere hour has gone by. Within this short period of time, five strangers have given Karin von Flüe glimpses into their lives. Just fragments, but they allow her to guess at the five stories behind them. «Many people think the law is a dry affair, when in fact it's all about life itself,» von Flüe says.



**Karin von Flüe, originally intended to become a physical education teacher, ultimately became a lawyer and has been working in the Beobachter's telephone consultation service for 25 years, focusing on family law.**

«Especially here, at Beobachter.» She takes off her headset, nobody is currently waiting on her lines. Time for the second coffee of the morning.

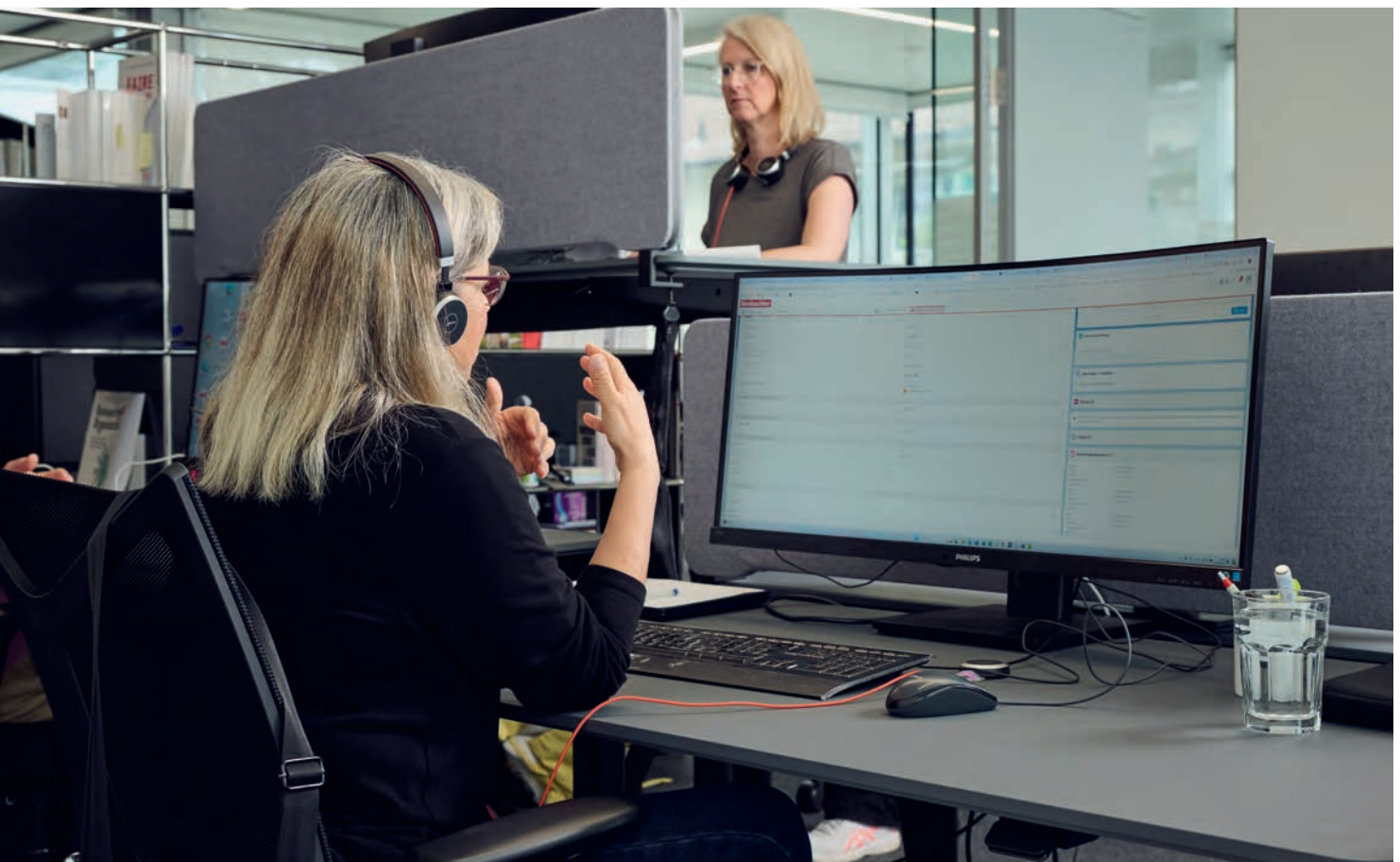
She drank her first cup with her colleagues on the balcony at the Medienpark in Zurich-Altstetten. «Our morning prayer meeting,» as von Flüe says, with a wink. On this day, five of them are at the office, the others are working from home. Beobachter magazine's advice team numbers more than thirty members, they include lawyers and attorneys, but also social workers. Advice by phone from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. is only one of their jobs; they also manage the digital legal advisor, answer inquiries via e-mail, write for the magazine – or contribute, as Karin von Flüe does, to the training of their website's chatbot, which is currently being tested as a supplement to personal advice.

When she began working for Beobachter back in the year 2000, the hotline was just being introduced. «Until then, there had been no distinction between the editorial and legal advice teams. Subscribers would send us their files by mail, and at our offices, everyone handled everything. Until the inquiries increased to the point where we were totally swamped,» she recalls. Advice by phone was a big hit right off the bat, and it remains the heart of Beobachter to this day. For many readers, this offer is what motivates them to get a subscription. Sometimes, the editorial office also uses the hotline as a seismograph, for instance when, on the consumer protection side, inquiries regarding a certain company accumulate, or there are signs of a new type of scam.

Karin von Flüe is short and petite and comes across as very alert. One can well imagine her spending her evenings after work dancing to pop music at a fitness studio, which is one of her passions. Her delicate red cardigan makes her stand out in the austere gray office. On her desk, under a pile of paper, is a copy of the Swiss Civil Code. Just in case. She rarely needs to consult it. On the one hand, she has years of experience, on the other hand, legal expertise is just one aspect of her advice. These conversations

## Advice by phone was a big hit right off the bat, and it remains the heart of Beobachter to this day.

At the Ringier location Medienpark in Zurich, an average of five specialists work at the Beobachter hotline. Additional employees are working from home.



are about so much more. Within a very short time, the advisor needs to be able to engage with a person of whom she only has the name and the voice in her ear to go by. Some clients present their issues in a very structured way. Others drown her in a flood of information, and Karin von Flüe first has to puzzle out, by deftly managing the conversation, what the inquiry concerns. «Often, it is about the questions behind the questions, which the client doesn't state or maybe is afraid to ask. That's challenging,» she says. Each advice session is meant to take about ten minutes. «But if there are lots of emotions in play, as in the areas of family or inheritance law, it can take longer.»

As a young woman, Karin von Flüe originally wanted to become a gym teacher. She married early and not very happily. «A lot of things have happened in my life where I thought in retrospect, if I'd known better, I wouldn't have fallen flat on my face so badly.» She was 26 by the time she went to university, having previously trained as an executive assistant. «That was a job that gave women quick access to the management floor, and it paid well, which helped me finance my law studies.» While she was studying, she also worked at a Zurich attorney's office, where she was able to do her first legal clarifications. She passed the bar, practiced as a lawyer, toyed with the idea of becoming a judge – and finally decided that this wasn't the world where she belonged.

### **Clocking out with no strings attached**

Instead of going to battle for a client in court or showing off her great legal knowledge as an attorney, she would rather listen and explain the law to laypeople. In this sense, she also considers herself an interpreter. «I well remember the advice a seasoned colleague gave me when I began to work at Beobachter,» Karin von Flüe says. «You know,» she told me, «to do our job well, you have to like people.» That is exactly what it's about to her. She personally also enjoys the brevity and the intensity. Whenever a call ends, the program gives her a minute to make a few notes in the file that is created for each client, and then it's on to the next case, the next life, the next problem. If she feels uncertain in a certain area, she consults with her colleagues in the afternoon and then calls the client back. But as a rule, once she says goodbye, the case is closed. «When I switch off the computer at the end of the day as an advisor, I don't have any pending matters like an attorney, who often stays with her clients for years. Some of my colleagues miss that sometimes, but I appreciate it.»

Karin von Flüe's hardest cases concern divorcing parents fighting for custody of their children. «No matter how many experts get involved – at the end of the day, every solution will be bad. In conversations like that, I soon get out of my comfort zone, because there is little I can achieve in legal terms.» There is one advice session that she remembers in particular: a woman who was in deep conflict with the father of her child, nothing worked. «No matter what I suggested, she had already tried it. I recall summoning all my courage and telling her: Dear Ms. So-and-so, I am at my wit's end. I don't know how to advise you.» There was a brief pause on the line and then the woman said: «Okay, at last someone is being honest with me. Thank you for that.» For Karin von Flüe, this conversation was a key moment in her job. It motivated her to show empathy. To take people and their problems seriously. And most of all: to listen, even when there is no solution. ●



The consultation hotline is open daily from 9 p.m. to 1 p.m. In addition, the consultants and specialists also manage the digital legal advisor and respond to email inquiries.

The Beobachter consultation center is unique in Switzerland. For almost 25 years, around 30 lawyers, financial experts, and social workers have been providing written or telephone information on legal issues. In 2023, there were 33,947 telephone consultations through the Beobachter hotline, with each call lasting an average of nine minutes. The Beobachter consultation center is the heart of the Beobachter magazine published by Ringier Media Switzerland. Since its founding in 1926, the core themes have been law and justice. The research, stories, and advice articles are published in print, online, and in the magazine's own app.



# A feast for reporters

**This year, the USA will elect their new president. For Peter Hossli, head of the Ringier School of Journalism, it is already the seventh American campaign that he has covered on the ground. How does he approach it? With a road trip through the swing states, and with a visit to the National Conventions in Milwaukee and Chicago.**

**Text: Peter Hossli | Photos: Nathalie Taiana, Peter Hossli**

**T**he bedclothes at the airport hotel in Milwaukee were smelly. It is Sunday morning, 7 a.m., and I'm knocking on the door of room 344. «Hi, Nathalie, are you up? We have to go.» Zurich called, they want something and they want it pronto. And this is after we have spent four days driving 1,000 miles through America's heartland, searching for, finding, interviewing, photographing and filming people every day.

Biden or Trump? And why?

The resulting story was published in today's SonntagsBlick, a report on the mood in the key states that will decide the presidential elections this autumn.

And on the day of its publication, the story is already obsolete. While the printing

machines were running in Switzerland, a 20-year-old man fired shots at Donald Trump (78). The Republican presidential candidate survived. «Nathalie, we have to go.»

It is the summer of 2024, with US elections, a feast for reporters and photographers who are eager to work. A time to practice journalism. Unbiased and uninfluenced. The kind of journalism that emerges when you listen, let people talk, and reproduce their stories objectively.

These are the seventh US presidential elections that I am covering. This summer, something is happening that is a rare event and can change the course of history. An assassination attempt on a candidate. And a party that switches out its male candidate for a female candidate in the middle of its campaign. Reporting on all of that on the ground – that is what journalists live for.

Planning begins early. Three dates are important: the National Conventions of the Republicans and the Democrats. And election day on the first Tuesday in November. To attend the conven-



Pam Olthof (58) sells merchandise for Donald Trump in Butler, Pennsylvania. She has been traveling to Trump's appearances.

tions, you have to apply as early as February. The Blick Group has to fight for its two accreditations; they finally go through.

While swimming in Lake Zurich, I get the idea of a road trip through the contested swing states. A look at the map helps me determine the itinerary. The Republicans will choose their candidate in Milwaukee. Between Milwaukee and New York lie Pennsylvania, Ohio, Michigan and Wisconsin. A trip through these key states will explain America better than any desk-chair analysis.

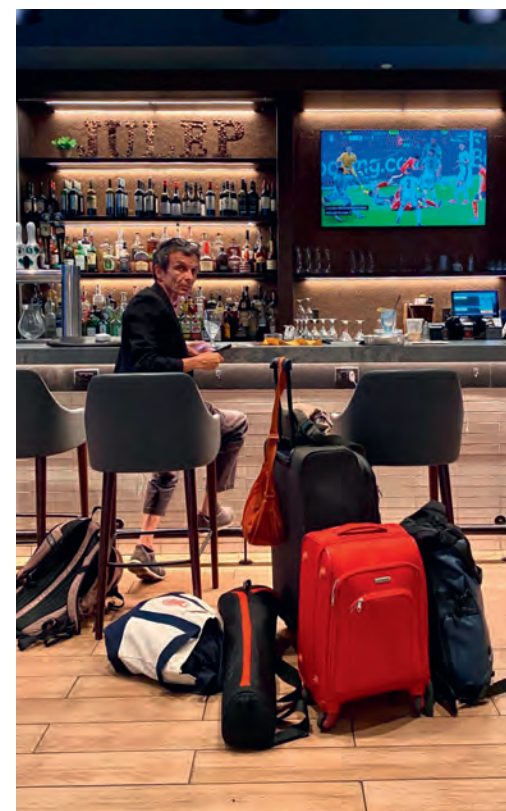
The team is just as important as the itinerary. It takes a reporter and a photographer who are prepared to work hard, who like to get up early and only go to bed when everything is done and dusted, who don't submit half-baked stuff.

The photo desk hires Swiss photographer Nathalie Taiana, who has just finished advanced training at New York's International Center of Photography. We meet at a car rental office in New York's West Village – and take off, across bridges and freeways, leaving the Atlantic and the East Coast's forests behind, passing Rust Belt factories, filling up the car, drinking watery coffee and eating sticky pastries.

In Butler, Pennsylvania, we talk to a woman selling Trump fan merchandise. She not only sells his products, she will vote for him, because she feels he is better for the country's economy. In East Cleveland, Ohio, one of the poorest and most dangerous areas in the US, an 80-year-old Black hairdresser tells us he is fed up with the debate about Joe Biden's age (81). He will certainly vote for him, because he thinks Biden is good for America.

These are the kinds of contrasts we are looking for, they demonstrate the diversity of this divided country.

Deadline passed, now some Football: Before reporter Peter Hossli moves into the apartment in Milwaukee, he watches the European Championship final.



Interview in the barbershop in East Cleveland: Reporter Peter Hossli interviews Art McKoy (80), who shaves the head of rapper Recognize Real (34) his head.





Reporter Peter Hossli in conversation with Debbie Muta (34) at Neen's Diner in Scranton, Pennsylvania.

# “ It's like keeping five balls in the air.”

It helps to be a European reporter. American media's reporting is reputed to be partisan. Many people are more open towards Europeans and give them straighter answers.

For instance, in Dearborn, Michigan, where we visit the country's biggest mosque, where 300,000 Arab Americans live, lots of young people who speak Arabic and English perfectly. And who are turning away from Democrats, because Biden has supported Israel in the Gaza war.

While we are returning the rental car at the end of our journey at Milwaukee airport, shots are fired at Trump in Pennsylvania. For a few days, at least, everything changes.

Early Sunday morning. Photographer Nathalie Taiana is up, we Uber to town with all of our luggage as we can't move into our apartment before 4 p.m., the story needs to be done by 1 p.m., the European soccer cup's final begins at 2 p.m. In-between all that, we have to pick up our accreditations for the Republican National Convention.

It's like keeping five balls in the air.

We sit in a café, order an espresso and a latte – and fan out. I look for interviewees, talk to them, go back and watch our luggage while Nathalie takes their picture.

We make the deadline, get the accreditations, watch the Euro 2024 final in a hotel bar. Next to us is an English journalist, behind us a Spanish colleague who cheers at the final whistle.

The National Convention lasts four days. For four days, we take in where Republicans stand, what their plans are for the country. That is the compulsory section. Beyond that, for our free section, we follow what catches us our eye. Journalistic curiosity is to decide what we report on apart from the daily events.

We realize: Lots of women support Trump. This sexist, of all people, who paid a porn star hush money following an alleged affair. Women between 21 and

Photographer Nathalie Taiana photographed at the World Famous Superfly Barber Shop by East Cleveland Art McKoy.



77 tell us that they like Trump because he says what he thinks. That there are no wars when he is president. That he appointed a lot of women to his cabinet.

Our days follow a tight schedule. Get up at 7 a.m., start work at 8 a.m., submit photos and texts by 1 p.m. so the paper can still print them despite the time difference. We spend the evening with party members in the sports arena. Nathalie takes pictures of the speakers and I write down what they say, rephrase while others are speaking so that, by the end of the evening, we will have an analysis that holds up and can be posted online in time for breakfast in Switzerland. As soon as the arena is cleared, we stand in its center and record an additional video analysis. Which immediately goes online.

Long after midnight, we trudge home, 30 minutes on foot, past numerous security checkpoints. We talk about what worked, where we failed and most of all: what we are going to do next.

The flight from Milwaukee to New York is three hours. At last, we'll have a few days off. I buy a movie ticket for a screening at 6 p.m., a blockbuster to clear my head. At 2 p.m., Biden withdraws from the campaign. And here comes the call from Zurich: «Can you write something for us?»

I think: Really? After 18 days non-stop?

«Sure, by when do you need the text?» – «5 p.m.»

Three hours later, the story is online, closely followed by the video. On my way to the movie theater, Schweizer Illustrierte's editor-in-chief calls. She commissions a cover story about Vice President Kamala Harris (59), the Democrats' new candidate. I have trouble focusing on the movie, my mind is already composing the next piece about Harris.

It's a rush that just won't end. The following morning, the e-mails from Zurich have come in. Another analysis about Harris, please. Okay, there are historic things happening. Take breaks when nothing happens.

My analysis is as objective as possible. While most US media now back Harris in order to stop Trump, I write that she has so far mostly been known for creating mayhem, that she does not have a clear message and that will hardly be enough for her not to be Trump. A former colleague from the Sunday paper NZZ am Sonntag reaches out, saying that my piece is one of the best things he's read in the past 24 hours. This small token of appreciation cheers me up.

On a day that I am truly off work, I visit Brooklyn's Williamsburg neighborhood. Many ultraorthodox Jews live here. Almost all of the men use old flip phones. Why not smartphones? A store owner explains: «Our phones don't have internet access. We don't want to know anything, and our children shouldn't know anything.»

# “ It's a rush that just won't end.”



He doesn't want to know anything because he believes. This man has the same number of chromosomes as I do – and he is my exact opposite. I want to know everything. A need that this summer certainly satisfies. ●

At the end of the Republican party convention in Milwaukee, photographer Nathalie Taiana sends her pictures to Zurich.

Reporter Peter Hossli in conversation with political consultant D'Seanté Parks at the Democratic convention in Chicago.



Ringier Group

# A selection of images



**Blick**, Switzerland. Photography: Thomas Meier  
How to make a mint by means of cool moves was the subject of a story about three Swiss fitness professionals and influencers, so-called fitfluencers. One of them, Leandro Fornito, combines breakdance and fitness in his athletic videos. With north of 1.5 million followers, this former animal attendant now makes a good living with his fitness videos; his body is literally his capital.





**Blikk**, Hungary. Photography: Zoltán Knap

The scale and the audience may be small, but the joy is enormous: Budapest's Children's Railway is a popular attraction and recently celebrated its 75th anniversary with a big party. This Hungarian children's railway boasts a 7-mile narrow-gauge track, the longest of its kind in the world, and it is actually run by kids aged 10 to 14. They undergo four months of training and go on to become children's railway train service crew members operating signal towers, working as train attendants and selling tickets.



**Bilanz**, Switzerland.

AI Visualization: Sy Goldstein / AI Artists for Bilanz. In his article on Swiss start-ups that are taking off and growing into scale-ups, writer Marc Kowalsky explored the financing models of these budding companies. To illustrate the story, the pictorial team resorted to artificial intelligence. This resulted in unusual portraits of the CEOs of Yokoy, Scandit, Oviva (pictured), Beekeeper and SonarSource.



**Elle**, Romania. Photography: Susan Buth

Cleo Zu Oettingen-Spielberg is not only an aristocrat but also an influencer and a model. For Elle Romania, she posed with the new knitwear collection by Ami Amalia, in her family's own Bavarian castle Oettingen, no less. The title of the cover story was «Royal Knits» – a truly princely story spread out over 12 pages.



**Interview by Ringier**, Switzerland. Photography: Frederike Helwig

Publisher Michael Ringier receives Ann Demeester, Director of the Kunsthaus Zurich, at his home in Küsnacht. In rooms filled with art from his own collection, the two of them talk about the role of museums, collectors' strategies, the significance of art in the Ringier company and much more.

**L'illustré**, Switzerland. Photography: Gabriel Monnet  
For this report on the training of avalanche dogs, the photographer traveled to the Valais region of Haute-Nendaz and into the ski resort Les 4 Vallées. There, he had himself buried in a snow cave. Nala, a four-year-old Australian Shepherd, dug out the «victim» in record time, with Gabriel Monnet's camera flashing and Yvan Morath, the dogs' head trainer, beaming.





**Schweizer Illustrierte**, Switzerland. Photography: Joseph Khakshouri  
In the canton of Aargau, where he lives, he is an inconspicuous resident; in Kosovo, he is a superstar: Lugati, aka Gjon Karrica. A singer with a yen for extravagant outfits, he has hundreds of thousands of followers on social media, and now he has embarked on a second career in Switzerland, his second home, where his family fled during the Yugoslav war.

**Beobachter**, Switzerland. Photography: Imagebroker/  
Alamy Stock. Montage: Beobachter  
Journalist Tina Berg caused quite a stir with her story about toxic PFAS substances. Because, according to her research, the chemical industry is trying to stop the EU's PFAS ban. These so-called forever chemicals are found in solar panels, frying pans or pizza boxes and are absorbed by our bodies when we ingest food, causing damage to all our organs. A harrowing exposé Beobachter illustrated with an impressive array of photomontages.



# Two green thumbs and a big heart

His first job as a private gardener more than 40 years ago was literally sweet: For three years, Samuel Beljean pampered the park of Rudolf Sprüngli of the homonymous chocolate-making dynasty, before moving away from Lake Zurich to the canton of Aargau in 1987. In Zofingen, he looked after the estate of publisher Hans Ringier and his wife Eva until they passed. And to this day, «Sämi» also keeps the park surrounding the Villa Römerhalde, seat of the Ringier School of Journalism, in good shape.

Text: René Haenig | Photos: Joël Hunn

He surely has by far the most idyllic workplace that Ringier has to offer, with a glorious view across the Mittelland region to the alpine summits of Eiger, Mönch and Jungfrau gleaming in the distance: Samuel Beljean (63). For 37 years, this trained gardener with two green thumbs not only makes sure that the 3.7 acre park of the Ringier School of Journalism at Villa Römerhalde in Zofingen (canton of Aargau) thrives and flourishes; together with four colleagues, he also looks after the private and company estates. This includes the greenery sur-

rounding the Pressehaus on Dufourstrasse as well as the private gardens of publisher Michael Ringier and parts of the park around the printing plant Swissprinters in Zofingen, which is set to close at the end of September.

Sämi, as everybody lovingly calls him, joined Ringier in 1987. Born in eastern Switzerland, he was 26 and had just become a father for the first time – and it was his second job as a private gardener. He is quite proud of this designation without being in any way haughty or presumptuous. On the contrary: Sämi is someone with an extremely humble and very modest demeanor, and his helpfulness is almost legendary. Hannes Britschgi (69) who ran the Ringier School of Journalism for 12 years, still has fond memories of the gardener: «A man you could always count on and who had a solution for any problem. We became friends.»

Peter Hossli, who took over from Britschgi as head of the school in 2022, is also full of praise, saying that Samuel Beljean is his most important collaborator at Zofingen. «A wonderful man. Reliable, interested – and a good conversationalist to boot.» When Hossli took on his new job as head of the «Jouschu» at Villa Römerhalde, and the caterer responsible for feeding the students ran out of staff, Beljean immediately volunteered – and got his daughter and his wife to help out as well.

Samuel Beljean grew up in Tübach (canton of St. Gallen), not far from Lake Constance. He is the eldest of





three siblings. His father worked at the SAIS oil and fat works, an erstwhile Swiss food company; his mother was a home-maker. «I didn't do very well at school,» Sămi admits, which is why he soon realized «that I need to learn a craftsman's trade.» He tried out for three professions: cook, mailman and gardener. «After that, I knew: Gardening is the job for me!» And so, he moved out of his parents' house at the tender age of 16, because the place where he would begin his training was too far from home. He found lodgings with a host mother – and wound up dealing with «a very strict master. I don't have very good memories of my apprenticeship,» he says, looking back.

#### Witch hazel, not forsythia

In addition to reliability, application and loyalty, Sămi is distinguished by another special quality: faith. In the course of our conversation, he interjects «thank God!» more than once. To Samuel Beljean, it is little short of a miracle that he landed his first job with Sprüngli and went on to be hired by Hans Ringier. «During my job interview, Rudolf Sprüngli wanted me to name a certain plant. Stupidly, I claimed that it was forsythia when it was really witch hazel. Despite my blunder, he gave me the job.»

The way he came to Ringier was also very special, as far as he was concerned. Half a year before Sprüngli told him he would divest his estate and therefore no longer require a gardener, Sămi had spotted a classified ad in an Aargau paper saying that the Ringier family was looking for a private gardener. «But the timing was wrong for me.» Six months later, however, Sămi came across the same ad in a trade journal for horticulture – and he applied. At his job interview, the first question caught him completely off-guard. «Are your family Huguenots?» Hans Ringier wanted to know regarding Beljean's



name. «Back then, I didn't quite know what to make of that. Now I know that Ringier's own ancestors had also been Huguenots, who fled France and found a new home in Zofingen.»

Hans Ringier, the father of current publisher Michael Ringier (75) died in 2003. He was a man Sămi really liked right from the start. At the time, the Ringiers were self-supporters, their vegetable garden and a flower nursery complete with a greenhouse and heatable hotbeds were on the premises of Villa Römerhalde. «Every day, I would bring them fresh salad.» Sămi was deeply impressed by Ringier's foresight and his openness for new things. «Whenever I asked him about new tools like weed whackers or leaf blowers, which would make my job easier, he was always open-minded about that sort of thing. He

Twice a year on the 3.7-acre grounds, Sămi trims around one thousand feet of hedgerow of hornbeam and box. He uses battery-powered clippers.

Left page:  
The grass on the meadow in front of Villa Römerhalde has been mown and dried. Samuel «Sămi» Beljean rakes up the hay. The second reaping in autumn will serve his boss as feed for his goats and deer.



Good tools are essential. Small tools like pruning shears, a spatula and a little hoe are part of the Ringier gardener's basic equipment. Gloves protect his green thumbs.

them more and more damage," he sighs. Apart from dealing with such biological pests, the gardener also frequently has to contend with the consequences of severe weather. In 2011, for example, a storm felled five big trees on the grounds of the School of Journalism. «They snapped like matchsticks.» The storm was so violent that Sämti feared it might take off the roof of the Villa. The once-in-a-century flood at Zofingen in 2017, which «even made the news on TV», is another event that Sämti remembers with trepidation.

was an old-school kind of boss, and he had a close relationship with his beautifully designed French garden, of which he knew every border and every tree.

The tree population alone at Villa Römerhalde remains fantastic to this day: a sweet-chestnut tree, one of Switzerland's stoutest birch trees, various types of maple, spruce pines, fir trees, common beeches and hornbeams. The imposing box hedges, however, had to be replaced by Sämti. «The box tree moth was causing

The harshest personal blow that fate dealt Samuel Beljean, however, was when his marriage with his first wife failed. Their four joint children, a boy and three girls, were between six and 14 years old at the time. «It pulled the rug out from under me, and there were days when I no longer wanted to live,» Sämti recalls. He had deeply loved his wife and for a long time, he could not imagine ever remarrying. Years after the divorce, however, he did say «I do» once more. For 16 years now, he has been living happily with Therese in the garden house on the grounds of Villa Römerhalde. Looking back, he says with a grin, the experience taught him one thing:

Whenever Samuel Beljean's gaze wanders below the birch tree to the southwest on a nice day, he can even see the distant summits of Eiger, Mönch and Jungfrau in the Bernese Oberland.





«Never say never again!» Two-and-a-half years ago, Sāmi lived through another special moment, when his first wife lay dying. «She had cancer. Shortly before she passed, I visited her at the hospital, and we reconciled with each other, so she was able to let go at peace.» The fact that his current wife Therese actually encouraged him to take this step, which was so important to him, fills him with «enormous gratitude».

### Sleepover party at the Villa

Two years from now, Sāmi will officially reach retirement age. He has put out a few feelers to find out «whether I mightn't be able to go on working one day per week or so.» He is, after all, a gardener with a great deal of heart and passion. And a good soul too. Sāmi not only has the proverbial green thumb for plants; he also has the magic touch for the «Jouschus», as the students at the Ringier School of Journalism have always been nicknamed. He has seen generations of them growing up and helped many of them in word and deed. Journalists Vanessa Nyfeler (21) and Yara Vettiger (25) who recently graduated from the School, remember: «When we were planning a sleepover party at the Villa in our last week of school, he even brought mattresses and allowed us to shower at the garden house where he and his wife live,» Vanessa says. And Yara mentions Sāmi's big-hearted offer «for me and another Jouschu colleague from eastern Switzerland to sleep at his house during our week of training at Zofingen so we wouldn't have to travel such a long way home.»

That kind of praise makes Sāmi's eyes beam. He takes quiet pleasure in it, while his heart is doing cartwheels. That is Samuel Beljean, whom everybody lovingly calls Sāmi: the gardener with the two green thumbs and the truly big heart. ●



The workshop and tool room in the garden house at Zofingen are always kept tidy and spotless by Samuel Beljean. After hours, he puts plants outside the workshop.



Using a tape measure, Sāmi checks the girth of one of the birch trees in the park at Villa Römerhalde. With its circumference of 11.4 feet, this is one of Switzerland's «stoutest» birch trees. It is around 100 years old.



# “ Is there hope for democracy? I don't know ”

Interview: Katrin Ambühl | Photos: Branislav Waclav

The relationship between politics and the media has long been tense in Slovakia. The assassination attempt on Prime Minister Robert Fico on May 15 has heightened tensions even further. Peter Bárdy, political journalist and editor-in-chief of Aktuality.sk, assesses the situation for DOMO.



Peter Bárdy is an expert on the political scene in Slovakia and the editor-in-chief of Aktuality.sk.

**Peter Bárdy, your book «Zuzana Čaputová – Courage for Humanity» was published this June.**

**Why did you write about the former president of Slovakia?**

She was a logical choice. Firstly, because she ended her presidency this year and announced that she would retire from politics altogether. I wanted to understand why. Secondly, she was a very special personality in Slovak politics. In times of increasing polarization and growing populism, she herself was a counterpoint: She strove for reconciliation, calm, understanding and humanity. She gave hope to so many people in our country, which was all the more important in these dark times after the Covid crisis, with the war in Ukraine and high inflation.

**It was already your third book about a political figure.**

The first two were political background stories about the Prime Ministers Igor Matovič and Robert Fico. Both became bestsellers, which motivated me to write the book about Zuzana.



Peter Bárty met with the former President of Slovakia, Zuzana Čaputová, multiple times for interviews for Aktuality.sk and for his book. Here he is in 2022 at the Presidential Palace in Bratislava.

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**We deliberately use  
intertitles that  
are attractive but  
not aggressive.**

**How was the new book about Zuzana Čaputová received by the public?**

Very well. I dare say that it could become Ringier Media Slovakia's most successful book and one of the most successful non-fiction books of this year.

**Let's get back to the assassination attempt on Fico in May. Immediately afterwards, the media were blamed for it. What is the situation like today?**

Not much better. Immediately after the attack, everyone was aware of the need for de-escalation, for moderation in the debate. In fact, the attack changed the rhetoric of the government politicians. They spoke somewhat more moderately and removed the term «enemy media»

from their vocabulary. But for them, critical journalism – the basis of our media house – cannot be moderating at all, they see it as an attack on politics.

**Specifically, what was the situation at Ringier Slovakia like after the attack?**

For a few weeks, police officers and security specialists provided security, but then we went back to normal everyday mode.

**How has the assassination attempt on Fico changed the political landscape, Slovakian society and the relationship between politics and journalism?**

The relationship between politics and the media has calmed down in the meantime. At the same time, the Slovakian parliament has voted in favor of restructuring the country's public media. As a result, the broadcaster RTVS is to be dissolved because it is biased, i.e. critical. Its replacement is now the state-affiliated STVR. They are also planning to establish a state media regulator to intervene in the online space.

**«Will this attack change Fico? Will he be the same prime minister?» Questions like these were often heard after the attack. What do you think?**

Robert Fico has already recorded a video since the attack on him, and we saw the same «old» Fico, an even angrier one. In the video, he blamed the media, the liberals and the West. It was pretty scary. But at least we now knew where we stood. Our editorial team thinks carefully about how it can calm the public debate, for example with restrained titles, or we deliberately use intertitles that are attractive but not aggressive. However, we are not the only ones who need to do something to calm the situation; politicians must make the biggest contribution themselves.

**You published a book about Fico at the end of 2023. What was the reaction then and what is it now?**

Robert Fico's party, Smer, filed a complaint against me with the national election commission, arguing that, with this



In June 2024, Peter Bárdy's third book was published. It provides insights into the political events and personal experiences during the five-year presidency of Zuzana Čaputová.

book, I was influencing the elections and damaging the party. That was nonsense, of course. Then followed a flood of accusations against the book and against my person, mainly from dubious media outlets spreading conspiracy theories and from influential social media players. But I always had the support of our pro-democracy population, which gave me strength. And it motivated me to organize discussion groups throughout the country to debate the threats to democracy, countermeasures, media freedom, etc.

**The murder of investigative journalist Ján Kuciak and his fiancée six years ago was a decisive event for the Slovakian media world. What has changed since then?**

I believe that media freedom is worse today than it was before and immediately after the murder of Ján and Martina. Members of the government, including those from previous governments, are now attacking independent media and media professionals and want to bring them under control. One attempt to do this is the aforementioned reorganization of broadcasting approved by parliament.

**You once said that Slovakian society is particularly susceptible to disinformation. Why do you think that is the case?**

The reasons are complex. They include the poor education system, a still-present pro-Russian attitude or nostalgia for socialism. We have little experience with critical thinking, controversial debates

and democratic processes. In addition, our institutions are weak and can do nothing when the political caste wants to steal from the state.

**How do you see the situation for the media in your country compared to neighboring countries?**

The situation in Hungary is very bad. We are in contact with several important Hungarian media houses that have not given in to pressure from Viktor Orbán's pressure and continue to produce high-quality critical journalism and investigative reporting. They are heroes in my eyes. As far as I know, the situation for the media in Poland is fortunately changing for the better. But it is and will remain so: Nationalist populism hidden behind conservative slogans is a serious threat to democracy and media freedom.

**You need a lot of courage and hope for your commitment. Where do you get it from?**

I've been working in journalism for 30 years, that's a long time. I was there when former Prime Minister Vladimír Mečiar, an ex-boxer, was known for physically attacking media professionals, and I'm still there. Nothing has changed for me: My loyalty is to the public. And as long as they trust me and believe I'm doing a good job, I'll carry on and provide people with reliable, verified facts, classify and comment on political events. People want this information on our news platform, it's a privilege, and I certainly don't want to disappoint them. And is there any hope for democracy in Slovakia? I don't know. ●

**Biography**

After studying journalism at the University of Banská Bystrica, Peter Bárdy initially worked for radio stations and magazines, focusing mainly on crime and the mafia. Since 2008, he has been editor-in-chief of the online medium Aktuality.sk of Ringier Slovakia, where he increasingly specialized in political topics. He was the boss of journalist Ján Kuciak, murdered in 2018, who had worked in Aktuality.sk's investment team since 2015. In 2018, Bárdy and his editorial team published the book «Umlčaní» (Silenced) about the background to the murder of Kuciak and his fiancée. In 2017, the 47-year-old and his colleagues from Aktuality.sk won the Slovakian Publishers' Association Prize for their reporting on the 25th anniversary of the Slovak Republic. This was later followed by books about Prime Ministers Igor Matovič and Robert Fico, and finally in 2024 the publication about former President Zuzana Čaputová.

# Book birds on the castle grounds

Text: Katrin Ambühl | Photo: Hampton Court Palace

The English term «bookworm» and the German word «Leserratte» (reading rat) have always annoyed me. I read a lot and enjoy it, but I have never felt like a worm or a rat. If anything, I feel more like a bird gliding on outspread wings into ever more new, unknown worlds. Do other avid readers feel the same? Be that as it may, the number of book aficionados keeps growing. This is partly evidenced by the excessive boom of book clubs that began during the corona pandemic. It was only logical, because what else, if you please, was there to do in our mandatory stay-at-home life apart from home-office work, baking, online yoga sessions and reading? And talking about it in an online book club?

Reading groups are the done thing nowadays. Not only for mere mortals but also for celebrities. Many of them – almost exclusively women, incidentally... – have their own book club: Oprah Winfrey, Dua Lipa, Reese Witherspoon and even Her Majesty. The Queen's Reading Room is an initiative launched by Queen Camilla. She, too, was probably bored during the pandemic. In any case, back in January 2021, when she was still the Duchess of Cornwall, she founded a book club on Instagram and posted recommendations to readers. Two years later, this became a charity with worldwide reach. Its website features videos and podcasts, readings by writers and conversations about literature with celebrities. And of course, there are recommended reads by Her Majesty herself and her royal husband. King Charles's tips are not particularly original and hardly to my taste: a book about World War II, say, or a profile of Napoleon. His wife, by contrast, indulges in various genres, including children's books, entertainment and gothic novels. In addition to classics like «Dracula» or «One Hundred Years of Solitude», however, she also praises more recent publications. It was with almost princely pleasure that I found she had also fallen in love with one of my favorite books of the last few years: «Lessons in Chemistry» by Bonnie Garmus, which Her Majesty describes as «warm, witty and wise», pretty much hitting the nail on the head.

Her celebration of books is not confined to podcasts and readings on the website [thequeensreadingroom.co.uk](http://thequeensreadingroom.co.uk). In summer of 2023, The Queen's Reading Room Festival was held at Hampton Court Palace for the first time. Almost 10,000 visitors made the pilgrimage to the palace in June 2024 to listen to various readings by Ian Rankin, Lee Child, Elif Shafak and other writers of renown. None of them, however, are quite as famous (yet) as the author who experienced highlights of his career at this venue: William Shakespeare. Hampton Court Palace was where, in 1603, his great plays «Hamlet» and «Macbeth» were first performed. Shakespeare would certainly enjoy the Queen's literary festival and the general passion for reading some 400 years after his death. To read or not to read, that is definitely not the question in the Royal book club. ●





# Happy Birthday

# 5

To honor Forbes Women's anniversary, we asked Agnieszka Filipiak to give us an interim report. She has been working for the magazine since the day it was born and is now its Deputy Editor-in-chief.

Quotes: Agnieszka Filipiak  
Editor: Katrin Ambühl  
Portrait photographer: Mikolaj Starzyński



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Our readership consists primarily of women in politics, finance, science and the media, ranging from students to senior citizens over 70. That's great, but it's also quite a challenge to meet the expectations of such a broad target audience.

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Women achieve more success nowadays, but we are also concerned with increasing their visibility in the media and in public debates. Promoting female role models is the mission not only of Forbes Women but of the entire RASP Group, since it joined the EqualVoice initiative in 2021.

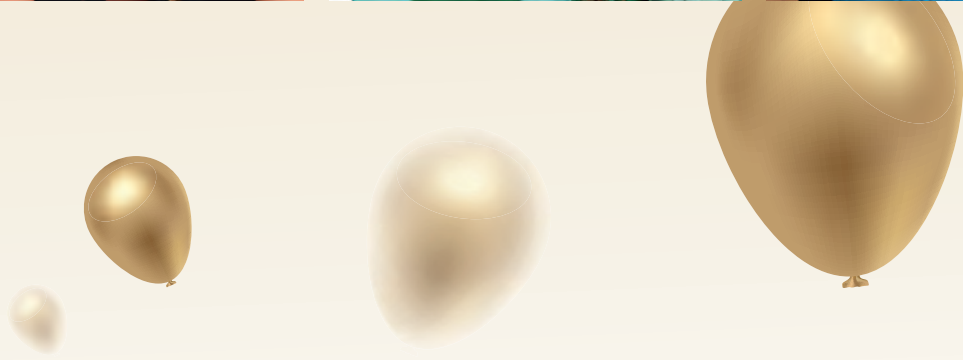


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In the run-up to last year's parliamentary elections in Poland, various women's organizations and magazines urged women to get out and vote, as many women were hoping for progress, for instance in terms of the legal foundations of reproductive medicine. And the great turnout actually helped bring about a regime change. Even so, the fact that we have only a small proportion of women in important political positions remains striking.

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I am firmly convinced that knowledge is power. That is why I consider it a privilege to inform people about delicate issues. I regard it as a responsibility on the one hand and as a great pleasure on the other.



Forbes Women is part of the Grupa Ringier Axel Springer Polska AG. Since the print magazine was launched 5 years ago, it has been supplemented with an online platform, podcasts and a series of initiatives and events. The latter are designed to support women in their careers and in their private lives. «Forbes Women is unique within the Polish mediascape. No other publication reports so prominently about business women and female role models,» says Deputy Editor-in-chief Agnieszka Filipiak. The magazine also stands up for the rights of women, girls and minorities, she adds.

This anniversary year has been and will be celebrated with various activities. These include an outdoor exhibition at Warsaw's Royal Łazienki Museum, where 20 plates with Forbes Women covers of female role models were displayed. One of the plates was a kind of mirror in front of which female visitors could take pictures of themselves and create a cover with their own image.



# AI workshop instead of Latin dance class

The Baltic states are among the most digitally advanced regions in the world and offer ideal conditions for entrepreneurial innovation. Povilas Kytra, CEO of CV Keskus, relies on digitalization and agile management methods to successfully lead Ringier's job platforms into the future. His vision is to create more value through strong teams, efficient organization and the targeted use of new technologies.

Text: Katrin Ambühl | Photo: Monika Penkutė

The Ringier International Marketplace Unit (RIMU) Marketing Lab took place in Vilnius in spring 2024. Here, professionals from Ringier's digital marketplaces exchanged ideas and talked about the challenges and opportunities of AI. The capital city of Lithuania was the perfect venue for the event, as this small Baltic country and its two neighbors Estonia and Latvia are leading the way in terms of digitalization. There are also historical reasons for this, as the Baltic states, after gaining independence from the former Soviet Union in the 1990s, pushed ahead with digitalization. The school system is completely digitalized, all administrative procedures can be completed online thanks to the digital ID card based on the Finnish model, which all citizens possess and can use to submit tax returns and any other administrative procedure – and they have been doing so for many years.

## **Stronghold of unicorns**

The Baltic states are considered to be business-friendly and the tech scene is active and agile. «We are among the countries with the most unicorns per capita in the world,» says Povilas Kytra. The telecommunications application Skype (sold to eBay for 2.5 billion back in 2005) was the first unicorn from Estonia, followed by Wise (originally TransferWise), Europe's most valuable Fintech, Playtech, the world's largest online-gaming software supplier, and Bolt, a ride-sharing platform that operates in 40+ countries in Europe, Africa and South America.

In Lithuania, the online platform Vinted was one of the start-ups estimated to be worth at least one billion US dollars before going public. The fact that Povilas has so much expertise in digitalization is due to this very company. «My wife and I wanted to



In summer 2023, CV Keskus presented its new brand identity combined with an optimized search engine and recruitment platform. Users now can easily save job offers and evaluate candidates on their smartphones. The applications were created in-house with the help of AI Co-Pilot.



take a Latin dance course six years ago, but we both realized that we were much more interested in something else: a weekend course on artificial intelligence offered by the AI lead of the then start-up Vinted. There, I learned how AI can be used in companies, was fascinated and continued with the course for three years,» says Povilas, emphasizing that he had no clue at the time how much this topic would shape his career.

### The power of alignment

Povilas' goals are ambitious: «Our vision is to deliver three times more value. For jobseekers, this translates to three times more listings, and for employers, it means three times more hires compared to any other job site in our region.» says the CEO of CV Keskus. His demands on the teams are high, and precisely because the companies are located in three countries, each with its own language, Povilas' top priority is to ensure that all teams – be it Finance, HR, Marketing or Development – are aligned and share the company's goal. «We work closely to ensure the team is aligned with common goals. Our employees understand what enhances our customers' willingness to do business with us, leading to quicker and smoother decision-making on which initiatives to pursue.» Povilas is convinced.

A trained economist, he bases his methodology on the models «The Lean Startup» and the «Better, Simpler Strategy». The latter was written by Felix Oberholzer-Gee, Professor of Business Administration and member of the Ringier Board of Directors. In this book, the author provides a framework of creating value for customers, employees, and suppliers, which in turn drives financial success.

### Squads and Tribes

CV Keskus is headquartered in Estonia and belongs to Ringier. The leading Estonian job site cvkeskus.ee was launched in 2000, followed by the Latvian job site cvmarket.lv in 2003, and the Lithuanian job site cvmarket.lt. In March 2004. Povilas Kytra joined CV Keskus in 2006, was appointed to its board in 2009 and has been working as its CEO since 2015. AI is at the heart of the company. New tools are constantly being developed and improved. Current examples include an AI-generated job search tailored to customer-based criteria or a mobile application for iPhone/Android. «Our development is moving

strongly in the direction of augmented intelligence, i.e. AI multiplied by human intelligence,» Povilas points out. And he also knows that AI is not everything for a company. «AI makes us faster and more productive,» he is convinced. The CEO believes that intelligent organizational design and efficient communication between the various companies and teams are just as important. He deals intensively with the issues of organization, communication and methodology. «We have introduced agile management tools with squads and tribes, a Spotify model. For the squads, i.e. the smallest team units, we have introduced the rule at CV Keskus that if a squad wants to launch a new idea, they communicate it. If no one responds within three days, it means that everyone agrees. This decision alone has made us much faster,» explains Povilas, adding: «This requires a flat hierarchy and my complete trust in my employees and the squads. But it also means that you have to have the guts to be ready to fail with an idea.»

While the focus was primarily on local optimization of products and marketing channels until recently, the CV Keskus team now aims to increasingly emphasize the scalability of innovations and the digital visibility of its brand, as a response to the impacts of AI-supported algorithm updates from Google. «For example, we have updated our brand identity, launched a more user-friendly interface, and adapted our platform to enhance Google's perception of us as a trustworthy brand,» the CEO explains. His very personal identification with the company is high and his self-motivation is strong. «I enjoy knowing that our work profoundly impacts people's lives. Picture a single mother urgently seeking employment, receiving the life-changing news that she's secured a job through our portal. It's simply fantastic.» ●

# Abracadabra

Text: Katrin Ambühl | Photos: Zamir Loshi

Everybody's talking about artificial intelligence. Many people warn about it, others are excited, and laypeople tend to feel out of their depth. The book «Alles überall auf einmal» («Everything Everywhere At Once»), written by two proven experts on AI, was presented in the course of the event series Blick@The Studio in July to a hand-picked audience. The reading soon made it clear that the book is as profound as it is entertaining. Did you know, for example, that the British mathematician Ada Lovelace is acknowledged to have been the world's first computer programmer? She had an astonishingly accurate vision of AI – in the year 1843! Or do you know ELIZA, a precursor of today's chatbots? This computer program was conceived by scientist Joseph Weizenbaum in 1965 as a psychotherapist and talked to test subjects, who confided many things to ELIZA and sometimes fell in love with «her».

The book (available in German only) points out that the topic of artificial intelligence has been preoccupying people for centuries – because they are curious and creative. But what does any of this have to do with Abracadabra? That is the title of the chapter that discusses the question whether ChatGPT and its ilk will eventually know more and do everything better than humans. Whether humans might even have to yield their uniqueness, which is based on thinking and creativity, to AI. Are machines the new magicians of our time? These are some of the questions addressed in this inspiring book, which not only covers the aforementioned aspects but also the economic, political and media-relevant contexts of artificial intelligence. ●

The authors Léa Steinacker (left) and Miriam Meckel presenting their book at The Studio.

Journalist, entrepreneur and social scientist Léa Steinacker is an acknowledged expert on AI. She has been on Ringier's AI Advisory Board since 2023.



Co-author Miriam Meckel is a professor of Corporate Communication at the University of St. Gallen and co-founder of ada Learning.



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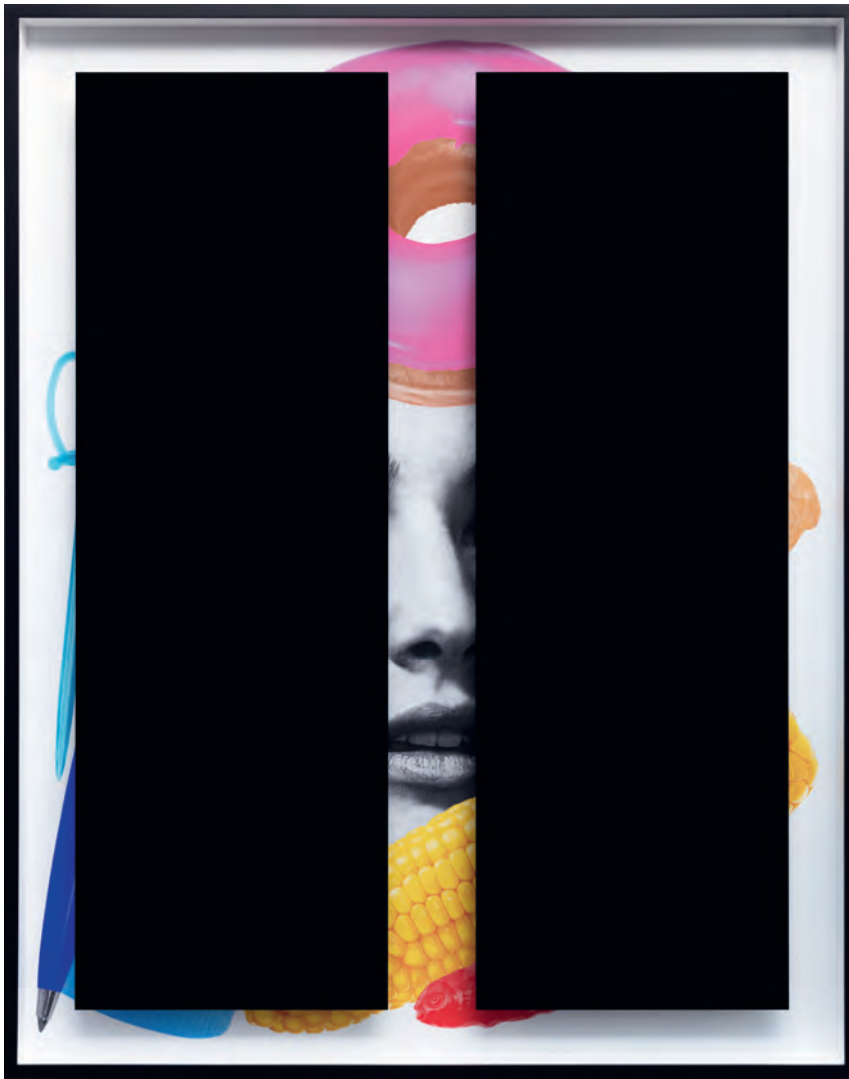
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Black Bars: Déjeuner No. 12 (Girl with Corn, Cocktail Pick, Pen, Peanuts, Swedish Fish and Donut), 2017 © Kathryn Andrews, Courtesy of David Kordansky Gallery, Los Angeles, CA, Photo by Fredrik Nilsen.

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The visual effectiveness of this work is both compelling and deceptive. The graphic impact of its two thick black bars that partly cover the brightly colored representations of objects and foodstuffs superimposed over the face of a young woman provides a contrasting and seductive composition that suggests a simple visual effort in support of a societal statement. Upon closer inspection of the object itself, the viewer struggles with its three-dimensionality, as its structure allows one to see a bit more only by leaning towards it. Intrigued but frustrated, the viewer resorts to a second artistic practice: The work becomes an active space in which one participates physically. And when doubt has undermined the reading of the work, its documentation reveals that the artist has deliberately and rather obscurely mixed certain elements not of her creation.

The viewer therefore enters into a third, maybe the principal artistic experience that Kathryn Andrews enjoys exploring in her work: challenging the artistic act itself, inviting us to question the role of Art in the work as well as that of the artist, thereby obliging us to be fully and actively aware of the creative act. The possibility that «Art» is what happens between the viewer and the work is a notion that I have always found inspiring. Observing the objective part of our contribution to any artistic endeavor engenders a cruel and constant doubt that invites us to practice humility and to renew ourselves continually. ●

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**Julie Body** is the Creative Director of the business weekly *Handelszeitung* and in charge of Visual Innovation at Ringier Media Switzerland. She has been working in the media for 26 years, first in France on the Art Direction team of «Le Monde», and as of 2006 in Swiss media. In 2015, she also co-founded the art and design gallery «La Sonnette» in Lausanne. In this article, Julie muses about a work of art at her workplace in Zurich's Medienpark.