

I stayed in Pforzheim for three nights — in each I ended the day walking from my hotel to Cafe Roland for a drink. It quickly became apparent to me that this was where the local students from the Pforzheim Goldsmith and Watchmaking School spent their time, and where I would likely feel most comfortable whilst in the area.

On my visit, I had two different interactions with the students and output from the school.

The first was in their presence at Ornamenta in the wellness centre König-Karls-Bad in Bad Wildbad, in the 'Bad Databrunn' showcase — via the self-service water bar; a long table of flasks, bottles, and other water vessels.

As part of the display, 70 students collectively presented their interventions upon 'standard' silver spoons. A spoon has an anatomy — a handle, a neck, a bowl, a tip — that gives it its distinct legibility and use value. The experiment here, I think, was to demonstrate the breadth of expressive potential that can be exerted unto an ordinary thing — to tease out the thresholds between tool and ornament; legacy and invention; tradition and modernism — and the conceptual silo between ornament-ing something and ornament-alising it entirely.

The second was on my second night at Roland. I had come across this Xeroxed poster for the Goldsmithing department's self-organised end-of-semester party on the bar's terrace the night before and liked how it looked and read.

Hours prior to the party I had been in Bad Wildbad, looking at the collection of spoons. At Roland, surely, I was in the company of at least some of their makers. The music was good, the people were kind, the prices were friendly — around midnight I found myself with a young artist who had just moved from Pforzheim to Berlin for her MA. She shared that she had studied goldsmithing at the school prior, but now she needed something less 'traditional' — an adjective I often think is used as a synonym for many others. She was wearing a beautiful, statement pearl necklace made by a friend, and a ring she made herself with tools from the school. She clearly loved them — loved having made them and wearing them; and I think, both because and in spite of this, was eager to find out how they made sense in other contexts, elsewhere.