
arwa news

50 years / 1955–2005

Company history

Initial phase 1955–1958

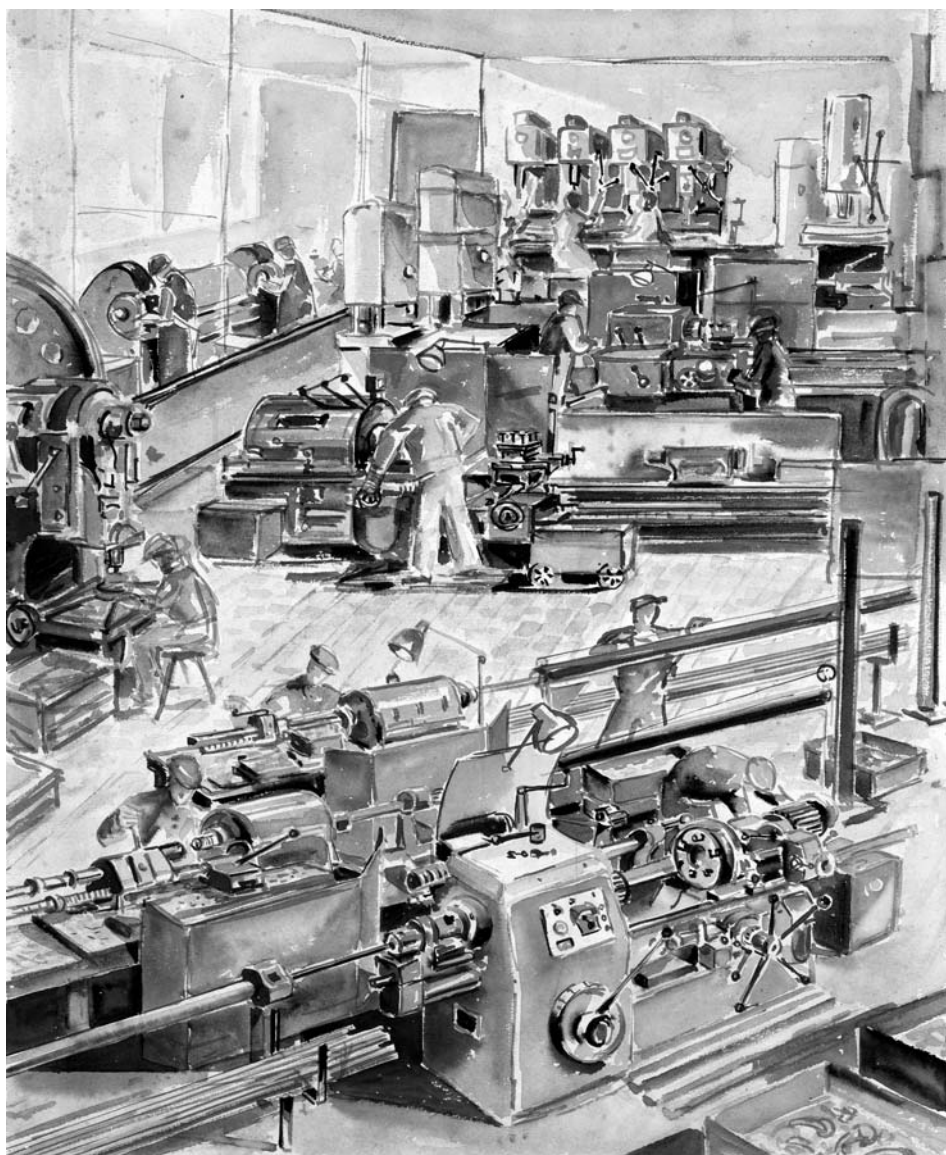
Due to a shortage of plumbing fittings, in 1953 the owners of the sanitary installation supplier, Sabez AG Zurich, introduced the arwa-therm, a production of sanitary fittings, which led to the foundation of «Armaturenfabrik Wallisellen AG» in 1955.

Redevelopment phase 1959–1962

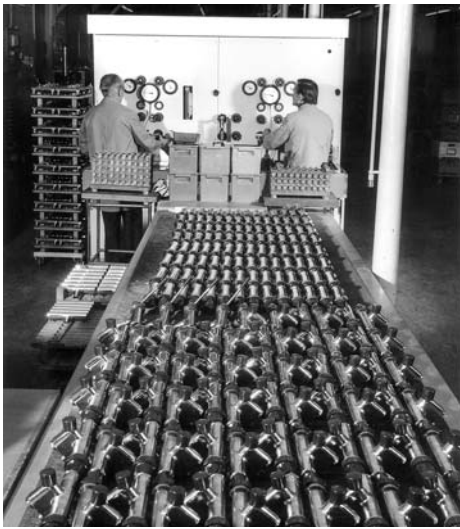
After the takeover by the plumbing fittings expert A. Egli sen., the company required redevelopment and refocusing. The entire range was redeveloped in stages, particular milestones being the development of arwa-typ and the overhaul of arwa-therm.

Consolidation phase 1962–1966

During this phase, arwa gained wide recognition and admission into the Swiss fittings manufacturing plant association (URS). Innovative products and a clearly targeted marketing policy facilitated this breakthrough.



Machining, 1956



arwa-therm assembly, 1974

Rapid growth phase 1967–1974 and the subsequent 1975/76 construction industry slump

The company's initiative and innovative approach was supported by a building boom during this phase. The launch of arku-tempera in cooperation with Kugler SA in 1968 is also noteworthy.

A. Egli sen. died in 1970 following a long illness. His two sons, Dr A. Egli (graduate of the University of St. Gallen) and W. Egli. (graduate engineer from the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology) succeeded him and set new goals for the future.

During this phase, the company concept of «focusing on comprehensive and efficient bathroom and kitchen fittings» was developed and implemented in stages. This resulted in a modular design of the range and problem-free, simple maintenance, by the use of compact cartridges.

Although the plumbing fittings industry was still operating at full capacity until the end of 1974, and even in December, arwa was working overtime, in January a sudden radical change in the building trade became apparent. Industry sales dropped significantly in 1975, which called for urgent crisis management by arwa. The company was able to overcome this critical situation by reacting quickly and falling back on its cash reserves built up during the boom period.

Economic fluctuations from 1976–1990

Through the initiative of companies and industrial associations, conversion and renovation of housing stock (at that time approx. 2.7 million units) gradually gathered momentum. Renovation and replacement business gradually increased and substantially compensated for the drop in new construction. Today, this type of activity accounts for approximately 70% of our industry.

The economic ups and downs of this period were a particular challenge for a small to mid-sized enterprise. While various competitors ceased production of plumbing fittings and arwa's main competitor came under German control, arwa survived this period without having to make further recessionary cutbacks.

After a sustained period of success for arwa-therm, the first arwa mechanical mixer was launched in 1976 under the brand name arwa-trend.

In 1983, a building project was begun and the first stage was completed on the company's property adjoining the Glatt shopping centre, which opened in 1975. This enabled two remote units to be concentrated on the company's own site on Richtistrasse.

In 1984, the successful arwa-twin range was launched, characterised by practical design and innovative functionality.

The ceramic disc mixer arwa-class followed in 1986, and replaced the arwa-trend piston mixer to become the main range.



arwa, 2005

The nineties

Regular exports were made for the first time during this period. Mainly kitchen fittings were exported to various European countries as well as to the USA and Asia.

These exports later led to sales and joint development work with prominent companies such as Geberit (water Socket-System), Gaggenau (sale of kitchen fitments in Germany and France) and Bultau (development and sales cooperation).

A new status was accorded to the basis business in the Swiss market, i.e. systematic development of large construction projects in the hotel, residential building and hospital sector and, linked to this, the forming of contacts with several prominent institutional clients and building contractors. arwa developed a particular strength in the hospital sector, in which it won several reference properties. As today's «architectural brand», arwa benefits from this conceptual work.

The economic recession at the start of the nineties was particularly difficult for the building industry. However, during this period as well, due to a prudent and consistent business

policy, arwa was spared extensive redundancies and restructuring. The partial slumps were absorbed with limited recourse to short-time working.

The phase of integration of arwa's core fitments business into the Similor Group

A lack of direct succession and strategic considerations regarding quickly advancing concentration and internationalisation persuaded the arwa management to approach Similor with regard to a possible collaboration between the two Swiss companies.

In the course of the negotiations the «Madison Private Equity Holding AG» investment company took a holding in Similor and in March 2003 joint venture contracts were signed between arwa and Similor.

As a part of the transaction, the Wallisellen manufacturing plant was divided in two parts. The fittings part was disaffiliated, renamed «arwa AG» and integrated into the Similor Group, located in Wallisellen as before. The name of the remaining portion of the company was changed to «AW AG» and subdivided into property, engineering (development) and trade areas.

Once its sound structure had been transferred into the Similor Group, the arwa brand was repositioned as an «architectural brand». This was the logical consequence of its strong design orientation and anchorage in property activity and the basis business of the company.

In the course of 2003, Madison took over full control of the Similor Group (Similor Kugler SA, arwa AG, Sanimatic AG), in order to build on the success and increase the internalisation of this group of companies, which had been primarily operating on the Swiss market.

The successful 50-year development of the Swiss mid-sized company arwa is the result of a clear and distinct company policy, a substantial number of loyal, important customers in the construction and sanitary markets and an extensive, experienced and enthusiastic workforce. We would like to extend our recognition and thanks to them all.

Range and design development throughout the history of arwa

Initial phase 1955–1958

arwa-therm, one of the first thermostatically controlled bath mixers, was developed in collaboration with the inventor Willy Honegger.



first arwa-therm, 1955

Redevelopment and consolidation phases 1958–1966

After the takeover of arwa by the fittings expert A. Egli sen., the range underwent a radical overhaul.

Consolidation of the arwa-therm invention was a priority. Teething troubles had to be overcome, and the redesign was completed in 1964, providing a single body with an easily replaceable control unit, which contained all the operating parts, enabled simple maintenance in accordance with the future groundbreaking cartridge system.



arwa-therm, 1964

In contrast to abroad, thermally controlled fittings were widely distributed in Switzerland before the mechanical single-handle mixers, which were introduced later. During the 60s, arwa sold a large number of these fittings and the arwa-therm brand became well-known.



arwa-typ, 1958

The beginnings of functional design came about with the two-handle arwa-typ fittings range. The range was designed in collaboration with the famous architect and designer Ernst Häfeli

(Häfeli, Steiger, Moser were the architects of what was then the canton hospital and is today Zurich University hospital). It was characterised by simple, ergonomic shapes and functional simplification.

Development to a full-range supplier for bathroom, kitchen and hospitals in the 70s

The aim of the new arwa management was the corporate policy of «focus on a comprehensive and efficient range of refined plumbing fittings for the bathroom, kitchen and hospitals». A consequence of this guideline was arwa's innovative concept of convenience levels. This involved grading the fittings according to convenience and price:

- Two-handle fittings
- Mechanical single-handle mixers
- Hydromats, i.e. mixers with automatic pressure equalisation
- Thermally controlled mixers

Accordingly, in 1968 the new arku-tempera hydromat mixing system was launched in cooperation with Kugler SA. This mixer was unaffected by pressure fluctuations and variations in the main network.



*Design conference between
A. Egli sen. and E. Achermann, 1962*

General distribution in Switzerland of the innovative warm water circulation pump, arwa-Vortex, began in 1969.

In 1976, the first arwa mechanical single lever mixer followed under the brand name arwa-trend. This was a piston mixer with a single moving part in the water, the piston.



arwa-trend, 1976

This period was characterised by shape and colour trends. The blue and brown design series (i.e. fitment handles with corresponding colours) are typical of this period.

Increased emphasis on design from 1976

The bathroom and kitchen gradually obtained a new status in the living area and emphasis was placed on aesthetic aspects in addition to qualitative and functional criteria.

With the «four design series – one technology» concept, arwa not only integrated these trends but also systematically assumed the lead. This primarily involved a segmentation of design in line with the main aesthetic trends within the market, but was also the key to efficient modular construction and consequently inexpensive production and simple maintenance.



arwa-twin, 1984

The successful arwa-twin range was launched in 1984, characterised by practical design and innovative functionality. Demand for arwa-twin has continued to increase right up until the present day.

The ceramic disc mixer arwa-class followed in 1986, which replaced the arwa-trend piston mixer to become the leading range.



arwa-class, 1986

This resulted in four design series:

- arwa-class for the general market
- arwa-fashion fashionable/trendy
- arwa-twin functional
- arwa-prestige exclusive

Coupled with this was the continuous development of modularity for efficient production and simple maintenance.

From the mid- to late 80s, these four ranges were equipped with patented «Trigon» ceramic disc cartridges. These provided integrated temperature and flow limitation, and the cartridge system enabled easy replacement should servicing become necessary.



Image campaign, 2005

arwa-clinic, a modular variation of the arwa-class range complemented by arwa-therm and arwa-tronic, became the key to arwa's strong market position in hospitals, nursing homes and doctors' surgeries as well as in the disabled sector.

- the «Unicount» water metering system
- the «Energy» system for saving water and energy

Improved market penetration was achieved as a result among plumbing engineers and fitters, with particular success in supplying the large-scale property development sector.



arwa-twin, 2005



arwa-twin therm, 1990

«Products and systems» – a strong case from the 90s onwards

In response to new trends in home automation, arwa expanded its single product offer to a «range of products and systems». In the fore-front were:

- the «Trigon» system, the special unit cartridge
- the water Socket-System developed in cooperation with Geberit
- the standardized in-wall fittings and tub filler units

The latest design trends

In 2003, a new trend and a significant addition to arwa-twin was created with the arwa-surf range. This light, curved design is already proving to be a great success.

In 2005 arwa-twin was redesigned again and adapted to the current trend of minimalist design.

This distinctive orientation will be completed by the arwa-quadrige range, which was launched at the Swissbau trade fair and will be in stock as of Autumn 2005.

The «architectural brand» profile was strengthened as a result.

Despite the numerous distinctly design-orientated products and systems, which can be seen through the 50 years of arwa history, the core principle of the corporate policy has always been adhered to:

«Fittings for bathroom and kitchen – comprehensive and efficient».



arwa-quadrige, 2005