

# Jan Tschichold and the New Typography

Graphic Design Between the World Wars

February 14–July 7, 2019



25 YEARS  
Bard  
Graduate  
Center  
Gallery

Jan Tschichold. *Die Frau ohne Namen* (The Woman Without a Name) poster, 1927. Printed by Gebrüder Obpacher AG, Munich. Photolithograph. The Museum of Modern Art, New York, Peter Stone Poster Fund. Digital Image © The Museum of Modern Art/Licensed by SCALA / Art Resource, NY.

# Jan Tschichold and the New Typography: Graphic Design Between the World Wars

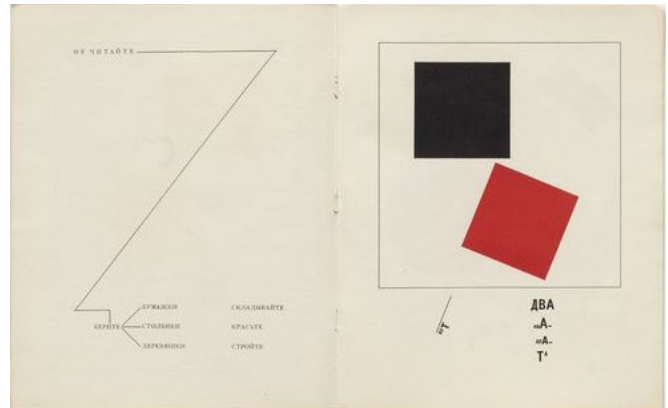
February 14–  
July 7, 2019

*Jan Tschichold and the New Typography: Graphic Design Between the World Wars*, a Bard Graduate Center Focus Project on view from February 14 through July 7, 2019, explores the influence of typographer and graphic designer Jan Tschichold (pronounced yahn chih-kold; 1902-1974), who was instrumental in defining “The New Typography,” the movement in Weimar Germany that aimed to make printed text and imagery more dynamic, more vital, and closer to the spirit of modern life. Curated by Paul Stirton, associate professor at Bard Graduate Center, the exhibition presents an overview of the most innovative graphic design from the 1920s to the early 1930s.

While writing the landmark book *Die neue Typographie* (1928), Tschichold, one of the movement’s leading designers and theorists, contacted many of the foremost practitioners of the New Typography throughout Europe and the Soviet Union and acquired a selection of their finest designs. A substantial portion of his collection, including work by El Lissitzky, Kurt Schwitters, László Moholy-Nagy, and Herbert Bayer, now in the collection of the Museum of Modern Art, will be displayed together for the first time.



Max Burchartz. *Tanzfestspiele zum 2. Deutschen tänzerkongress Essen 1928* (Dance Festival at the Second German Dance Congress) poster, 1928. Printed by F. W. Rohden, Essen. Photolithograph. The Museum of Modern Art, New York, Purchase Fund, Jan Tschichold Collection. Digital Image © The Museum of Modern Art/Licensed by SCALA / Art Resource, NY. © 2018 Artist Rights Society (ARS), New York / VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn.



El Lissitzky. *Pro dva kvadrata* (About Two Squares) by El Lissitzky, 1920. Printed by E. Haberland, Leipzig, and published by Skythen, Berlin, 1922. Letterpress. The Museum of Modern Art, New York, Jan Tschichold Collection, Gift of Philip Johnson. Digital Image © The Museum of Modern Art/Licensed by SCALA / Art Resource, NY. © 2018 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

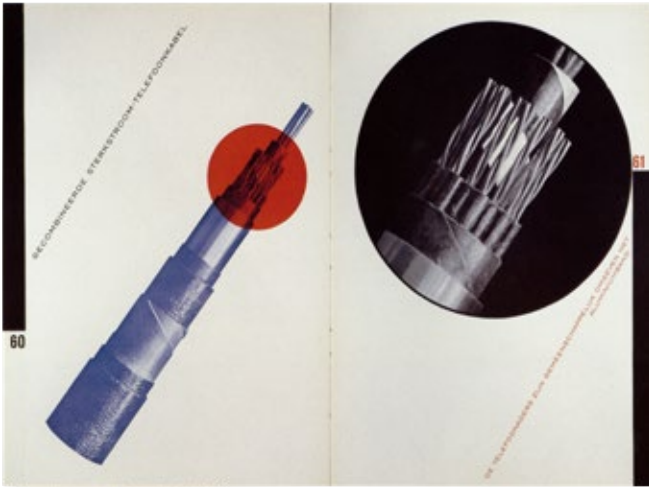
The New Typography is characterized by the adoption of asymmetrical layout, sans-serif letterforms, and the integration of photography with text in a manner that expressed a new and modern sensibility. Indeed, many of the designers felt that these techniques brought them to the threshold of a new consciousness, attuned to the experience of modern urban life in which new media, technology, and advertising were the shaping influences of the age.

Tschichold’s collection also reveals the key role played by less familiar designers, like Johannes Molzahn, Willi Baumeister, Max Burchartz, and Walter Dexel, in developing a modern graphic design language. In the exhibition, and its accompanying book, Stirton argues that the Bauhaus played a relatively minor role in the movement, especially in contrast to the group of advertising designers known as “The Ring” formed by Kurt Schwitters in 1927. Tschichold and many of his friends and colleagues were members of the Ring, and their exhibitions helped to promote their new ideas.

## The Exhibition

*Jan Tschichold and The New Typography* will present more than 120 examples of modern graphic design from the period 1923-1935, including posters, books, magazines, advertisements, business cards, stationery, brochures, and catalogs.

Beginning with Tschichold’s landmark texts “elementare typographie” (1925) and *Die neue Typographie* (1928), which helped to define the New Typography, the



Piet Zwart. NKF: N.V. Nederlandsche Kabelfabriek Delft, 1928. Letterpress and photolithograph, The Museum of Modern Art, Jan Tschichold Collection, Gift of Philip Johnson. Digital Image © The Museum of Modern Art/Licensed by SCALA / Art Resource, NY. © 2018 Artist Rights Society (ARS), New York / VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn.

exhibition includes an overview of Tschichold’s career, from his early training in calligraphy and “Blackletter” through his modernist work in the “new typography.” There will also be examples of his later designs for Penguin Books in London where he established one of the most famous house styles for a mass-market publisher. A highlight of the exhibition will be a selection of Tschichold’s film posters for Phoebus Palast in Munich in 1927, then the largest cinema in Germany, which were often produced at a few day’s notice but succeeded in establishing a new approach to film promotion.

The major portion of the exhibition, devoted to the New Typography movement, consists of five themes. The first, “Pioneers of the New Typography,” will display a selection of work by major artist-designers of the early 1910s and ‘20s who anticipated many of the design ideals that were taken up later. Examples by F.T. Marinetti, El Lissitzky, Kurt Schwitters, Theo van Doesburg, John Heartfield, and Aleksandr Rodchenko will be included here.

“Asymmetry and Sanserif Type” will be devoted to the new abstracted layouts that Tschichold identified as a defining feature of the new style. By the mid-1920s, designers began to compose their book covers, advertisements, and posters like abstract paintings, arranging text and imagery in a manner that liberated design from the traditional constraints of symmetry. The use of sanserif letterforms was economical, and expressed “clarity,” according to Tschichold.

The third theme is “Corporate Identity.” German designers were leaders in the field of branding and the ability to imbue a company or association with a clear, unified look through the use of distinctive graphic features like a logo

or color scheme that could be repeated throughout the entire organization. The young generation was quick to take this up, believing that their bold and simple designs were well suited to the promotion of modern companies and events. Displayed will be advertisements and publications designed by Piet Zwart for Nederlandsche Kabelfabriek, stationery and promotional material designed by Joost Schmidt for YKO office supplies, and the family of printed materials designed by Johannes Molzahn for the 1929 Deutsche Werkbund exhibition “Wohnung und Werkraum” (Dwelling and Workplace).

“Photography and The New Typography” presents a medium that was already undergoing a revolution with the introduction of the Leica camera and high-speed film. Tschichold and his contemporaries recognized the potential of the so-called New Photography to reveal an objective beauty and clarity in modern life. Photography was not only the most efficient way of depicting the visible world, it offered great potential for graphic communication combining text and illustration in ways that presented a new type of narrative. John Heartfield’s evocative book and magazine covers using photomontage and Willi Baumeister’s poster for “Die Wohnung” (The Dwelling) Werkbund exhibition in Stuttgart in 1927 are featured in this section.

“The Technological Age,” the final theme of the New Typography, will demonstrate how designers used innovative techniques to meet the requirements of



László Moholy-Nagy. Staatliches Bauhaus Weimar 1919-1923. Printed by Bauhaus Verlag, Weimar, 1923. Letterpress. The Museum of Modern Art, Jan Tschichold Collection, Gift of Philip Johnson. Digital Image © The Museum of Modern Art/Licensed by SCALA / Art Resource, NY. © 2018 Artist Rights Society (ARS), New York / VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn.

Germany's expanding industrial sector. The systematic organization of text, imagery, and statistical data was a key feature of the movement, just as many of the designers saw themselves as "engineers" rather than artists. Graphs, industrial machinery, parts catalogues, business reports, and brochures could all be organized in a manner that was clear and accessible, but the design also expressed an underlying belief that modern life would be directed by new technology.

Leading figures of the New Typography featured in the exhibition include Tschichold himself, Willi Baumeister, Herbert Bayer, Max Burchartz, Walter Dexel, John Heartfield, Frantisek Kalivoda, Gustav Klutis, El Lissitzky, F.T. Marinetti, László Moholy-Nagy, Johannes Molzahn, Aleksandr Rodchenko, Kurt Schwitters, Ladislav Sutnar, and Piet Zwart.

A fully illustrated book by Paul Stirton, published by Yale University Press, will be available in the Gallery and from the online store.



Kurt Schwitters. *6 Punkte bilden die Vorzüge der Stopfbüchsenlosen, Rheinhütte Säurepumpen, Weise Söhne, Halle/S* (Six points create advantages for ... acid pumps, Weise Sons, Halle/Saale) brochure, ca. 1927. Letterpress. The Museum of Modern Art, New York, Jan Tschichold Collection, Gift of Philip Johnson. Digital Image © The Museum of Modern Art/Licensed by SCALA / Art Resource, NY. © 2018 Artist Rights Society (ARS), New York / VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn.

## About Bard Graduate Center Focus Projects

Focus Projects are part of an innovative program organized and led by faculty members or postdoctoral fellows through seminars and workshops that culminate in small-scale, academically rigorous exhibitions and publications. Students, assisted by the Center's professional staff of curators, designers, and media specialists, are closely involved from genesis through execution and contribute to each project's form and content. The Focus Project promotes experimentation in display, interpretation, and the use of digital media, reflecting the Center's commitment to exhibitions as integral to scholarly activity.

## About Bard Graduate Center

As the leading research institute in the United States dedicated to the study of decorative arts, design history, and material culture, Bard Graduate Center and its Gallery have pioneered the study of objects as a means to better understand the cultural history of the material world. Offering experiences for scholars, students, and the general public alike, Bard Graduate Center is built on multidisciplinary study and the integration of research, graduate teaching, and public exhibitions. Since its founding in 1993, it has established a network of more than 400 alumni who work in leading museums, universities, and institutions worldwide to advance new ways of thinking about material culture.

In celebration of its 25th Anniversary, Bard Graduate Center will present a series of exhibitions and events that showcase the institution's groundbreaking research and approach to the study of tangible 'things.' Beginning in fall 2018 and continuing through 2020, the 25th



Johannes Molzahn. *Wohnung und Werkraum* (Dwelling and Workplace) poster, 1929. Printed by Druckerei Schenkalowsky, A.G., Breslau. Lithograph. The Museum of Modern Art, New York, Purchase Fund, Jan Tschichold Collection. Digital Image © The Museum of Modern Art/Licensed by SCALA / Art Resource, NY.

Anniversary celebration will include exhibitions on a diverse range of subjects, including *Agents of Faith: Votive Objects in Time and Place*, examining sacred objects and the practice of votive offering; *French Fashion, Women, and the First World War*; and *Eileen Gray: Creating a Total Work of Art*, an in-depth examination of the work and contributions of the iconic modernist designer and architect, presented in collaboration with the Centre Pompidou, Paris. Other initiatives during the anniversary years will also advance research and scholarship, recognize leaders in the field, present engaging programs for the public, and foster a new generation of students and scholars. [bgc.bard.edu](http://bgc.bard.edu).

## Gallery Programs

Lectures, gallery talks, and conversations are offered in conjunction with the exhibition. For more information, please call 212.501.3011 or e-mail [public.programs@bgc.bard.edu](mailto:public.programs@bgc.bard.edu).

## Exhibition Tours

Group exhibition tours are offered Tuesday through Friday between 11 am and 4 pm and Thursday until 7 pm. Reservations are required for all groups.

To schedule a tour, please call 212.501.3013 or e-mail [tours@bgc.bard.edu](mailto:tours@bgc.bard.edu).

Bard Graduate Center Gallery is located in New York City at 18 West 86th Street, between Central Park West and Columbus Avenue. Gallery hours are Tuesday and Friday through Sunday 11 am to 5 pm; Wednesday and Thursday 11 am to 8 pm. Suggested admission is \$7 general, \$5 seniors and students.

For information about Bard Graduate Center and upcoming exhibitions, please visit [bgc.bard.edu/gallery](http://bgc.bard.edu/gallery).

For press information and images, please e-mail Daniel Clay at [dclay@resnicow.com](mailto:dclay@resnicow.com)



Willi Baumeister. *Wie wohnen? Die Wohnung* (How should we live? The Dwelling) poster, 1927. Deutscher Werkbund at the Weissenhofsiedlung, Stuttgart. Lithograph. The Museum of Modern Art, Gift of Philip Johnson. Digital Image © The Museum of Modern Art/Licensed by SCALA / Art Resource, NY. © Artist Rights Society (ARS), New York/ VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn.