

The Museum of Modern Art

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UNIQUE LOOK AT GRAPHIC DESIGN OF 1920's AND 30's TO BE OFFERED AT MODERN MUSEUM

Posters, book jackets, and promotional brochures by pioneers of modern design such as Moholy-Nagy, El Lissitzky, Rodchenko, Max Bill, Herbert Bayer, Kurt Schwitters, and Marinetti, are included in THE GRAPHIC REVOLUTION: 1915-1935, on view in the second-floor Goodwin Galleries of The Museum of Modern Art from August 5 through October 31. Drawn from the collection assembled by designer Jan Tschichold, which was acquired by the Museum in 1950, the works in this exhibition underscore the claim that the years between 1915 and 1935 witnessed a veritable "revolution" in the graphic arts.

"Before World War I," notes J. Stewart Johnson, Curator of Design, who selected and installed the exhibition with the assistance of Ada Stroeve of the Stedelijk of Amsterdam, "graphic artists working in the Art Nouveau style tended to emphasize the pictorial in their designs at the expense of typographical elements. Lettering was often done by hand, and even when type was used, it was frequently treated as ornament, readability and clarity being sacrificed. After the war, however, a new appreciation of the mechanical became apparent in all the arts. People were fascinated by the power of turbines and engines, and artists glorified speed as symbolized by automobiles, steamships, and airplanes. Graphic artists, far from treating typography as a decorative accompaniment to the all-important pictorial representation, now found type beautiful in its own right and built their compositions often entirely from the components found in type foundry catalogues. Spare and geometric, these new works marked a revolutionary turn against decoration."

Because the same "machine" aesthetic was shared by a broader community of artists, architects, craftsmen, and designers, and was reflected in the furniture, buildings, and craft and industrial design objects that they produced, significant examples of works in other media are on view in the exhibition. These include paintings by Mondrian and Malevich, photographs by Moholy-Nagy; collages by Schwitters; architectural drawings by Mies van der Rohe; a van der Leek carpet; Gerrit Rietveld's model of the Schröder house and his famous "red and blue" chair, among other works from the Museum Collection. Also on view will be a number of El Lissitzky's Proun Prints.

In 1950, through the generosity of Philip Johnson, The Museum of Modern Art acquired the extensive collection of graphic designs that had been assembled by Jan Tschichold and that forms the basis of this exhibition. Tschichold, himself a respected and influential designer, was a friend of virtually all of the leading figures in the graphic revolution. Over the years he saved a variety of their designs-- everything from envelopes sent to him in the mail to large posters-- and these today provide a unique record of the most advanced typography of the period.

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Photographs and additional information available from Bruce Wolmer, Assistant or Linda Gordon, Associate Director, Public Information, The Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 St., New York, NY 10019. Tel. (212) 956-7295; 2648.