

Typophoto and The New Photomontage c. 1930

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“Photomontage will be the means of expression of the future. It enables a new type of combination of fragments of reality – on all levels of logic, into an illogical bond – as well as a field for the desire for fantasy”.¹
Max Burchartz

When Jan Tschichold first adopted *Typophoto* as a core tenet of the New Typography in 1925, he championed photographic illustration as precise, efficient, and objective.² However in practice, the New Typographers used photography as much more than a tool for objective representation. Accordingly, Tschichold's writings from around 1930 suggest a significant refinement of his thinking about photography and typography – both in terms of the relationship between visual and verbal representation and how that relationship is shaped by graphic design. In *Die neue Typographie* (1928), he had distinguished *Typophoto* from photomontage, describing the latter as a process of cutting, arranging, and pasting by hand, and sidestepping the material construction of *Typophoto*.³ By emphasising photomontage as a process of handwork, he had implied *Typophoto* as a product of machine work – supporting the claim that photographic illustration fortified type with technological precision, efficiency, and objectivity.

Despite these earlier claims, Tschichold sustained a major preoccupation with photomontage in graphic design. Around 1930, he planned to author a book, *Fotomontage* (c. 1930–31), which was never realised. What follows is a reconstruction of its intended argument using an extant typescript, recovering Tschichold's thesis that “the new photomontage” encompassed a capacious set of practices including experimental photography, collage, and graphic design. Tschichold intended to outline the experimental techniques of photography as integral to modern visual communication. He had evidently come to understand *Typophoto* as a form of composite image making, akin to Dada and Surrealist collage and printmaking.

After publishing *Die neue Typographie*, Tschichold came to understand photography's efficacy in design as a set of techniques that evoked active construction and affective response in the minds of beholders. This thinking was deeply influenced by German art historian and critic Franz Roh, who became an important interlocutor when Tschichold

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¹ Burchartz 1926: 42.

² See the section titled, “Photographie und Typographie”, in Tschichold 1987 (1928): 89–98. See Moholy-Nagy's 1925 *Malerei, Fotografie, Film* (Bauhausbücher 8).

³ Tschichold 1987 (1928): 87–95.

chold moved to Munich in 1926. Indeed, *Fotomontage* was planned as the fourth book in Roh's "Fototek" series.⁴ Given Tschichold's original claim that photomontage was antithetical to the objectivity of *Typophoto*, it is striking that Roh would charge Tschichold with editing this book. The collaborations of Tschichold and Roh, though little studied, signified a larger shift in the connotations of New Typography around 1930.

Tschichold's unrealised book on photomontage foregrounds an important paradox: the New Typography encompassed a dialectic between its own aspirations toward universal legibility and objectivity – encapsulated by "Functionalism" – and the strategies of Dada and Surrealism that the New Typographers employed in practice. The New Typography similarly destabilised photography as mimetic representation, betraying a strong link between surrealist approaches to photography and what Moholy-Nagy called "super-photography" in advertising.⁵ In order to be "functional", commercial design incited desire through word-image combinations that upended the expectation that text explains images and in turn, that images illustrate text. The dependency of functionalist graphic design on surrealist strategies of representation illuminates the extent to which the Weimar craze for rationalisation was fuelled by utopian fantasy and experiments with the human mind. The New Typography is thus perhaps best understood as emblematic of the utopian aspirations of Weimar Germany, rather than as an example of rationalisation that actually took place.

Photomontage, Old and New

All that remains of Tschichold's "Fototek" book is a typed outline and page of handwritten notes.⁶ However, they represent nearly a decade spent thinking and writing about photography and graphic design. The outline is rich with ideas that correlate to discourses found in contemporaneous exhibitions

and books. Advertisements for the "Fototek" series promised that *Fotomontage* would illuminate "significant possibilities that lie in this new manner of form-production" with "excellent examples".⁷ An announcement for "Fototek" touted the timely relevance of the book: "Especially, Tschichold's book on 'Photomontage' will be awaited with impatience, since this new area – so important to our graphic arts – has not been worked on to this day, although there exists already a wealth of excellent material of great beauty".⁸

Tschichold had three major goals for *Fotomontage*. First, he proposed that the technique of photomontage was not new, but rather had a history that began in the 19th century. "This [book] is a historical survey", he wrote, "a conscious historical document, showing what is

4 Only the first two books in the "Fototek" series were published: Moholy-Nagy 1930 and Biermann 1930. This advertisement for "Fototek" was designed by students at the Meisterschule für Deutschlands Buchdrucker, where Tschichold taught from 1927 to 1933.

5 Moholy-Nagy 1989 (1927): 92 (originally published: Moholy-Nagy 1927: 257–260).

6 These materials are located in Box 5, Folder 6, Jan and Edith Tschichold papers, 1899–1979, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles. Additionally, a typed set of notes that appears related to both *Fotomontage* and *Die neue Typographie* is included in Box 74, *Nachlass Jan Tschichold*, Deutsches Buch- und Schriftmuseum der Deutschen Nationalbibliothek, Leipzig.

7 "An Hand hervorragender Beispiele wird aufgezeigt, welche bedeutsamen Möglichkeiten in dieser neuen Gestaltungsweise liegen". "Fototek" advertisement, printed as back matter in Biermann 1930: n.p.

8 "Gerade das Buch von Tschichold über 'Fotomontage' wird man mit Ungeduld erwarten, da dieses für unser grafisches Gewerbe so wichtig und neues Gebiet bis heute noch nirgends bearbeitet wurde, obwohl schon eine Fülle hervorragenden Materials von großer Schönheit vorliegt". *Werkbund Gedanken* 1930: n.p.

good and bad. Examples and counter-examples”.⁹ He intended to situate what he called “the new photomontage” as a reinvention of the technique in early 20th-century avant-garde art – namely Constructivism, Futurism, Dada, and Surrealism – as well as in Modernist graphic design.¹⁰ A key ambition of this publication was to show that contemporary graphic design was inextricably linked to avant-garde art.¹¹ However, Tschichold also countered a narrative about the Modernist “invention” of photomontage. By identifying the origins of the technique in the 19th century, and by elaborating its applications beyond art making, Tschichold offered a counter-narrative to that of Raoul Hausmann who, in his remarks at the opening of the 1931 Berlin exhibition *Fotomontage*, defended Dadaists as “the first photomonteurs”.¹²

By identifying the origins of the technique in the 19th century, and by elaborating its applications beyond art making, Tschichold offered a counter-narrative to that of Raoul Hausmann who, in his remarks at the opening of the 1931 Berlin exhibition *Fotomontage*, defended Dadaists as “the first photomonteurs”.¹²

Hausmann and Tschichold claimed photomontage for different ends. Hausmann insisted on the future importance of photomontage to promote the continued relevance of Dada. Tschichold was interested in expanding the definition of photomontage by drawing meaningful connections between its many uses, including in advertising. Dutch artist and designer César Domela-Nieuwenhuis aggregated their diverging perspectives in his 1931 exhibition, *Fotomontage*, which included political propaganda and commercial graphics alongside art.¹³ Although Hausmann agreed to participate, he objected privately to the inclusion of commercial design by Tschichold, Moholy-Nagy, Herbert Bayer, and others. In a letter to Hannah Höch, Hausmann pointedly referred to these designers as “our descendants”, dismissing their work as “quite weak”, and praising Höch’s contributions by contrast.¹⁴

Tschichold’s unrealised book and Domela-Nieuwenhuis’s exhibition shared both a title and thesis about photomontage as a paradigm for dissolving boundaries between art and design, and between history and Modernism. Like Tschichold, Domela-Nieuwenhuis defined photomontage broadly, situating Modernist

9 “Es gibt einen geschichtlichen Querschnitt, will also bewusst historisches Dokument sein, und zeigt auf, was gut und schlecht ist. Beispiele und Gegenbeispiele”, Tschichold n.d. (1930–1931): 4. All translations of this document are the author’s own. The penchant for *Kleinschreibung* was a signature of New Typography. Designers including Herbert Bayer, Kurt Schwitters, and Jan Tschichold sought to optimise the Latin alphabet as “universally” legible by simplifying letterforms, abolishing letters unique to the German language, and dispensing with the convention of capitalising German nouns. This practice was strongly advocated by German engineer and theoretician Walter Porstmann in his highly influential book. Porstmann 1920.

10 The typescript includes a note about “Constructivist” design and names Futurist painting as an “influence” on contemporary photomontage. He did not explicitly discuss Dada or Surrealism, but many of the artist he names as potential examples of different kinds of photomontage were associated with these movements. He distinguished between historical precedents and current uses of photomontage, naming precursors from the 19th century “als Urheber der neuen Fotomontage” (originators of the new photomontage). Tschichold n.d. (1930–1931).

11 This was clearly also true of *The New Typography*, which included a section called “The New Art”, contextualising New Typography in part as an extension of Modernist tendencies in art that had begun with Impressionist painting. Tschichold 1987 (1928): 30–51.

12 Hausmann made this statement in a speech delivered at the opening of the 1931 exhibition *Fotomontage* in Berlin, which was also printed in the journal *A bis Z*. Phillips 1989: 178 (originally published: Hausmann 1931).

13 *Fotomontage* was organised by César Domela-Nieuwenhuis at the former Kunstgewerbemuseum, Berlin (today the Martin-Gropius-Bau), on view from 25 April to 31 May 1931 in the museum’s atrium. The exhibition also showcased works by graphic designers including Johannes Canis, Georg Trupp, John Heartfield, Paul Schuitema, Karel Teige, Friedrich Vordemberge-Gildewart, Kurt Schwitters, and Piet Zwart. *Fotomontage* 1931: n.p.

14 “Unsere Nachfahren, Tschichold, Bayer, Errell, auch Moholy-Nagy und Nerlinger sind recht schwächlich, leider”. Hausmann, letter to Hannah Höch, April 1931, Berlinische Galerie, BG-HHC K 695/79.

photography within longer traditions. The exhibition's first gallery displayed non-photographic works from the 18th and 19th centuries, referred to in the catalogue as "curiosities that can be seen as precursors of photomontage".¹⁵

Domela-Nieuwenhuis borrowed from the private collection of German photography historian Erich Stenger.¹⁶ He historicised photography as a technology that touched every aspect of modern life, defining the medium broadly, including techniques of "manipulation" such as photomontage and spirit photography.¹⁷ In his unpublished notes, Tschichold cited Stenger's collection as proof of photomontage's historical precedents.¹⁸

By characterising photomontage as historically rooted in the 19th century, Tschichold suggested that the origins of photomontage were not easily pinpointed, which Hausmann regarded as both threatening and false.¹⁹ Hausmann, Tschichold, and Domela-Nieuwenhuis did concur on one important score: all three defended photomontage as thriving and socially relevant around 1930. Domela-Nieuwenhuis refuted a cacophony of declarations in the German press – including art and advertising journals – that the medium of photomontage was a waning trend, or already dead: "It would be quite mistaken to think of it as a mere fad", he wrote, stressing that "photomontage is by no means passé, as one often hears, but rather in the initial stage of its development".²⁰

In a review of Domela-Nieuwenhuis's exhibition, German critic and art historian Adolf Behne at first credited Dada for "the invention of montage", thereby making "the rigid photograph mobile and thinking".²¹ However, he continued, somewhat provocatively:

But ... is the coat of arms of the old knight shields not the real ancestor of this new art form? Of course, there are the formal beginnings of montage, in those heraldic divisions of the surface, in the combination of half eagles, horse-tailed tails, double heads with mythical creatures, with crenelated walls and gates, with stars, suns, and comets.²²

15 "Herr Prof. Stenger ließ uns aus seiner wertvollen Fotografiensammlung Kuriositäten auswählen, die als Vorläufer der Fotomontage angesehen werden können". *Fotomontage* 1931.

16 Erich Stenger authored one of several prominent surveys of the medium's early history. His approach to collecting photography and writing its history are evident in his *Geschichte der Photographie* (1929), and in his transcribed remembrances, published in Halwani 2014.

17 Stenger 1939: viii.

18 Jan Tschichold, unpublished notes, page 67. Box 74, *Nachlass Jan Tschichold*, Deutsches Buch- und Schriftmuseum der Deutschen Nationalbibliothek, Leipzig.

19 Hausmann's objection to the application of photomontage in graphic design was at least partly due to personal animus toward Tschichold. In April of 1930, Tschichold received a letter from Hausmann admonishing him for excluding Hausmann from his 1928 treatise on New Typography, specifically in the narrative of Modern Art presented in the section, "The New Art" (Burke 2007: 115). In a letter to Hausmann dated 3 April 1930, Tschichold replied: "Ich möchte Ihnen in voller Ehrlichkeit versichern, dass ich Ihren Namen nicht absichtlich an den Stellen die Sie zitieren, weggelassen habe, ich bin mit Kurt Schwitters wie Sie befreundet, und vielleicht nehmen Sie Veranlassung ihn zu fragen, welche Erfahrungen er mit mir gemacht hat". (I would like to assure you, in all honesty, that I have not purposely omitted your name from the passages that you are quoting. Like you, I am a friend of Kurt Schwitters, and perhaps you will have an opportunity to ask him what experience he has had with me). In the same letter he also suggested that it was futile to pinpoint photomontage's "reinvention": "Ich glaube, dass es zu endlosen und unnützen Streitigkeiten führt, wenn man sich ernsthaft darüber unterhalten will, wer die Fotomontage neu erfand". (I believe that it leads to endless and useless disputes to seriously discuss who reinvented photomontage). Jan Tschichold, letter to Hausmann, 3 April 1930, *Nachlass Raoul Hausmann*, BG-RHA 1029, Berlinische Galerie, Berlin.

20 Domela-Nieuwenhuis 2012 (1931): 130.

21 "[...] die Dadaisten durch Erfindung der Montage das starre Lichtbild beweglich und denkend machen". Behne 1931: n.p.

22 "Aber [...] ist nicht das Wappen der alten Ritterschilde der eigentliche Urahn dieser neuen Kunstform? Natürlich, dort liegen die formalen Anfänge der Montage, in jenen heraldischen Aufteilungen der Fläche, in der Kombination von halben Adlern, von Roßschweiften, doppelten Köpfen mit Fabelwesen, mit Mauerzinnen und Toren, mit Sternen, Sonnen und Kometen". *Ibid.*

Behne reinforced and extended the exhibition's thesis by invoking photomontage's deeper history. He suggested that Modernism had emerged from a tradition of "divisions of the surface" in composite image making, which transcended boundaries of medium, material, and purpose.

Tschichold's typescript shows that he had clearly intended to weigh in on this debate about the past and future of photomontage. At stake was an understanding that photomontage had fundamentally altered perception. In one of the few fully-formed theses for his own project, Tschichold wrote: "My book intends to offer an overview of the possibilities of photomontage, established on the basis of its previous creation, to prove that the talk of the 'survival' of these graphics is empty chatter".²³ He would certainly have refuted Hausmann's accusation that photomontage had been debased by commercial design, instead upholding its broader use as proof of its staying power.

Tschichold's second goal was to produce a publication that would serve as both a theoretical text and practical handbook, offering prescriptions for "good" and "bad" photomontage illustrated with examples and counterexamples. The didacticism of this premise recalls that of *Die neue Typographie* and *Eine Stunde Druckgestaltung* (A Lesson in Printing Design, 1930). He had made a case for New Typography similarly, situating the movement as the natural progression of typography and printing and promoting the New Typography as a universal design programme, providing examples and counterexamples of his argument. Yet, the outline for *Fotomontage* also suggests that this book would have departed somewhat from the format of Tschichold's other publications.

Tschichold intended to blend the format of the design handbook with the theoretical premise and format of *Foto-Auge: 76 Fotos der Zeit* (Photo-Eye: 76 Photos of the Time, 1929), a book he made in collaboration with Roh in conjunction with the Deutscher Werkbund exhibition *Film und Foto* (Film and Photography, 1929–1931), which described and illustrated myriad uses of photography from its invention to the present.²⁴ *Foto-Auge* was an important prototype for Roh's "Fototek" series, inaugurated the following year. It consists primarily of a visual essay of photographic and photography-based images, preceded by Roh's introduction (printed in German, French and English). The book posited photography as a vehicle for new ways of seeing. It included

anonymous press and archival photographs; aerial, astronomical and X-ray photographs; designs for book covers, posters and advertisements; and collage and photomontage, including examples of Dada and Surrealism. The book showcased photography as inherently heterogeneous, riddled with contradictions, ultimately undefinable according to any single criteria. Their sequencing suggested that photographic images are best read dialectically. In his introduction, Roh argued that photography could extend the capacity of the human eye, or even replace it as a superior optical prosthesis.²⁵

23 "Mein Buch will a Hand des bisher geschaffenen einen Überblick über die Möglichkeiten der Fotomontage geben und nachweisen, dass die Rede von der 'Überlebtheit' dieser Graphik leeres Geschwätz ist". Tschichold n.d. (1930–1931): 4.

24 Roh and Tschichold 1929. For studies of *Film und Foto*, see Eskildsen and Horak 1979; Lugon 2010: 88–105; Stotz 1929; Zervigón 2014: 27–48.

25 Roh drew heavily from the distinction made by László Moholy-Nagy between photography as a "reproductive" medium that produced mimetic images of the world, and as a "productive" medium that could extend the capacity of the human eye and inculcate *Neues Sehen* (New Vision), a way of seeing commensurate with the technological revolution born of modernity. See especially Moholy-Nagy 1989 (1922); Moholy-Nagy 1925. See also Stetler 2014.

For Roh, photography included not only the mechanical production of images with a camera, but also myriad manipulations of photographic chemistry and printing. New ways of seeing engendered by photography, he argued, permeated the boundaries between the “isms” of contemporary art; between machine production and handcraft; and between art, design, technology and science.

Tschichold's third goal for *Fotomontage* was to situate the “new photomontage” as a paradigm for making, using and perceiving images. He intended to show that photomontage's myriad applications were part of a modern impulse toward montage that transcended divisions between mediums, between fine and applied art, and between techniques of production. The first extant page of the typescript lists a number of different applications as subcategories of photomontage, with shorthand names of artists and designers under each, indicating possible examples.²⁶ Based on the formats of the two extant “Fototek” publications, these names likely stood for images in a photographic essay, consisting of sixty reproductions, preceded by Tschichold's introduction.²⁷ He included the category of “freie Fotomontage” (free photomontage) in the outline, but offered no examples, enumerating instead its many uses.²⁸

The first applications of photomontage listed are “politische Fotomontage” (political montage, exemplified by the work of George Grosz and John Heartfield) and “Fotomontage als Witz” (photomontage as joke or satire, exemplified by Höch and Moholy-Nagy). As examples, he may have used works incorporating photomontage that had also been reproduced in *Foto-Auge*, such as Grosz's “*Der Sträfling*”: *Monteur John Heartfield nach Franz Jungs Versuch, ihn auf die Beine zu stellen* (“The Convict”: Monteur John Heartfield after Franz Jung's Attempt to Set Him on His Feet, 1920); Höch's *Von oben* (From Above, 1927); and Moholy-Nagy's *Leda und der Schwan* (Leda and the Swan, 1925).²⁹ **(figs. 19–21)** Notably, he named individuals who worked between avant-garde art and graphic designers between the two wars.³⁰

The typescript pays particular attention to the use of photomontage in graphic design. These included “Fotoplakate” (photographic advertising posters) and photomontage in book design and illustration as applications of

the technique by graphic designers.³¹

Tschichold may well have used one of his own designs for the Phoebus-Palast cinema in Berlin, made in 1926 and 1927, as examples of poster design. **(fig. 22)** These are among the few examples of applied photomontage in his own work. Despite Hausmann's disapproval of commercial photomontage, Tschichold's poster for the film *Die Frau ohne Namen* (Nameless Woman, 1927) anticipated what Hausmann later described as “photography and printed texts combined and transformed into a kind of static film”.³²

Importantly, the typescript points beyond examples of hand-held printed matter to include the design and representation of built space as the

26 The outline includes only last names of artists and designers and, in just a few cases, minimal notes indicating specific examples, but for the most part, specific works that Tschichold would have reproduced in his book are unknown.

27 Advertisements for the “Fototek” series specified that each volume was to include sixty large image reproductions, as in the published volumes on László Moholy-Nagy and Aenne Biermann.

28 I am grateful to Adrian Sudhalter for her generosity in thinking through this term and its translation.

29 Reproductions of these works appear as plates 49, 55, and 60 in *Foto-Auge*. The latter also appears in Moholy-Nagy 1930 as plate 3.

30 Notably, Tschichold's outline excluded Hausmann. However, in a separate typed set of notes that are likely related to the outline for *Fotomontage*, Tschichold acknowledged Hausmann as an innovator of Dada photomontage. Tschichold, unpublished notes, page 67. Box 74, *Nachlass Jan Tschichold*, Deutsches Buch- und Schriftmuseum der Deutschen Nationalbibliothek, Leipzig.

31 *Ibid.*: 2–3.

32 Hausmann 1989 (1931): 178–179.



19

fig. 19 George Grosz, "Der Sträfling":
*Monteur John Heartfield nach
 Franz Jungs Versuch, ihn auf die
 Beine zu stellen* ("The Convict":
 Monteur John Heartfield after
 Franz Jung's Attempt to Set Him
 on His Feet), 1920.
 Watercolour, ink, pencil, and
 cut-and-pasted printed paper
 on paper.



20

fig. 20 Hannah Höch, *Von oben*
 (From Above), 1927.
 Cut-and-pasted printed paper
 on paper. Collection Louise
 Rosenfield Noun, Des Moines,
 Iowa. Photo by Rich Sanders



21

fig. 21

László Moholy-Nagy, *Leda und der Schwan*
(Leda and the Swan), 1925. Gelatin silver print.

purview of both experimental photography and graphic design. Yet another application identified in the outline is “Fotomontage in der Architektenzeichnung” (photomontage in architectural drawing), naming Swiss architect Le Corbusier and Czech architect Jaromír Krejcar as examples. These notes may well have referred to representations of built architecture by Le Corbusier or Krejcar, who both employed photomontage in different forms, or to preparatory architectural drawings that integrated photographic elements. Le Corbusier used extensive airbrushing to isolate the “pure” forms of his Villa Schwob, built in 1916, in photographic reproductions for the magazine *L'Esprit nouveau*.³³ He also used photomontage to create what he called a “parallel discourse” among images in *L'Esprit nouveau* as well as in his books *L'Art décoratif d'aujourd'hui* (1925) and *Vers une architecture* (1923).³⁴ **(fig. 23)** Krejcar used photomontage to envision his 1923 Olympic department store in Prague, emphasising its structure as an assembly of pure geometric forms and its exterior planes as ready-made surfaces for advertising.³⁵ **(fig. 24)**

Both architects demonstrated a savvy awareness of the habits of the modern reader, who might flip through a book or magazine, skimming for visual content.

In the category of “Fotomontage in der Ausstellungsarchitektur” (photomontage in exhibition architecture), Tschichold named Moholy-Nagy and German graphic designer Joost Schmidt. Moholy-Nagy and Schmidt had become known for their experiments with photography in the design of exhibitions and advertising signage under the auspices of the Bauhaus sculpture workshop, which Schmidt re-established in Dessau in 1928.³⁶ Commercial projects of the

Bauhaus sculpture workshop under Schmidt's direction included a display promoting Junkers water heaters at the 1929 Gas und Wasser (Gas and Water) trade exhibition in Berlin, attributed to Schmidt and fellow Bauhaus instructor and Swiss artist Xanti Schawinsky. Of Moholy-Nagy's use of photomontage in exhibition design, Tschichold may well have had in mind the first room of *Film und Foto* (1929).³⁷ **(fig. 25)** Schmidt and Moholy-Nagy presented photography and text as detached surfaces – often suspended on wires or freestanding armature and seemingly exempt from the rules of engineering – which suggested the exhibition as an extension of the magazine.

Tschichold named El Lissitzky as an exemplar of photomontage in both architectural drawing and exhibition architecture. Long influenced by Lissitzky's typography,³⁸ Tschichold featured his designs for the Soviet sections of the 1930 *International Hygiene* exhibition and the 1928 *In-*

33 *L'Esprit nouveau* was a journal published from 1920 to 1925 in Paris, primarily concerned with contemporary architecture and design and dedicated to the promotion of the Purism movement, led by Amédée Ozenfant and Le Corbusier. The journal was produced under the direction of Paul Dermée and edited, typeset, and printed by Maurice Darantière. For more on Purism and *L'Esprit nouveau*, see Eliel 2001; Von Moos 1987.

34 Cited in Colomina 1987: 15. Colomina has noted that Le Corbusier used images to “construct the text”, rather than to illustrate it. She argues that, through his role soliciting advertising for *L'Esprit nouveau*, the architect began appropriating found commercial photography in his own writing and assimilating strategies of combining text and image from advertising.

35 This image was reproduced in Karel Teige's *Práce Jaromíra Krejčara* (The Work of Jaromír Krejcar, 1933) but likely circulated in the 1920s as well. Krejcar's use of photomontage was also well known to Tschichold from the cover design for the second issue of the Czech journal *Život* (Life) published in 1922. This design was reproduced as plate 19 in *Foto-Auge*.

36 See Bergdoll and Dickerman 2009; Paret 2007.

37 For more on Moholy-Nagy's exhibition designs, see King 2016: 139–150.

38 Lissitzky's typographic work was featured heavily in Tschichold's earliest publications on New Typography. See *Typographische Mitteilungen* 1925; Tschichold 1987 (1928).



22

fig. 22 Jan Tschichold, *Die Frau ohne Namen* (Nameless Woman), 1927. Offset lithograph. Photo by Jolie Simpson



23

fig. 23 Le Corbusier, "Autres icônes, les musées" (Other Icons, Museums), first published in *L'Esprit nouveau*, 20, January-February 1924, is a chapter of *L'Art décoratif d'aujourd'hui*, Éditions Cres, Paris 1925. Photo by Niccolò Quaresima



24

fig. 24 Drawing with photomontage by Jaromír Krejcar reproduced in the book Karel Teige, *Práce Jaromíra Krejčara* (The Work of Jaromír Krejcar), Václav Petr, Prague 1933.

ternational Press Exhibition in Cologne, commonly known as *Pressa*, in an article for *Commercial Art*, "Display that has Dynamic Force: Exhibition Rooms designed by El Lissitzky", published in January 1931.³⁹ (fig. 26) He praised Lissitzky's "visual design of the exhibition space and its contents", which incorporated "glass, mirrors, celluloid, nickel and other materials; by contrasting these new materials with wood, lacquer, textiles and photographs", as well as type in various thicknesses, sizes, colours, and orientations.⁴⁰ The result was an exhibition space that Tschichold described as "a sort of stage on which the visitor himself seemed to be one of the players".⁴¹ These examples would have demonstrated photomontage as a means of sensory immersion in exhibition design. As in the window display of a department store, the intermingling of photographic materiality with other surfaces and textures in Lissitzky's exhibitions was intended to absorb the viewing public into these environments.⁴² These immersive spaces implicated visitors as embodied participants. In a set of notes related to the *Fotomontage* typescript, Tschichold wrote that the "value [of photomontage] consists in the

fact that one can use it to form optical associations".⁴³ Thus he sought to enumerate its seemingly limitless applications in design as demonstrations of how to see and live in the modern world.

Franz Roh and New Typography: Between Reportage and Gestaltung

Tschichold's capacious concept of the "new photomontage" betrayed the strong influence of Roh. During his years living in Munich, Tschichold became personally and professionally acquainted with Roh as a neighbour, friend and collaborator.⁴⁴ After working on *Foto-Auge* together in 1929, Roh inaugurated the "Fototek" series on "new photography" in 1930. Eight books were planned, including thematic volumes on police photography, kitsch photography, nude photography, sports photography and a monograph on Lissitzky, including "Fotos und Typofotos".⁴⁵ In 1930, the first and only two books in the series were published: monographs on Moholy-Nagy and German photographer Aenne Biermann, both designed by Tschichold.⁴⁶ Their uniformity suggests that Tschichold's design would have served to unify the series visually.

A page of Tschichold's handwritten notes referenced Roh's ideas and

39 Tschichold 1931: 22–26.

40 *Ibid.*: 22.

41 *Ibid.*

42 Though these examples of Lissitzky's exhibition designs were mounted as political propaganda on behalf of Soviet Russia, Tschichold's discussion of them (especially in the context of an article for *Commercial Art*) tacitly recognised the strategies of communist propaganda and commercial design as closely related, if not entirely analogous.

43 Tschichold, unpublished notes, page 67. Box 74, *Nachlass Jan Tschichold*, Deutsches Buch- und Schriftmuseum der Deutschen Nationalbibliothek, Leipzig. This phrase is repeated, almost verbatim, in Tschichold 1930: 237–49.

44 In 1926, Paul Renner invited Tschichold to teach at the newly founded Meisterschule für Deutschlands Buchdrucker in Munich, connected to the Graphische Berufsschule of which he was director. According to Ruari McLean and Christopher Burke, Renner originally invited Tschichold to take the position Renner had previously held at the Kunstschule Frankfurt (Städelschule), but then followed up with the invitation to teach in Munich. See McLean 1997: 32; Burke 2007: 53. When Tschichold moved to Munich in 1926, he and his wife Edith became neighbours with Roh while living in Munich's Borstei housing project. Correspondence in the Jan and Edith Tschichold Papers at the Getty Research Institute indicates that the Tschichold and Roh families sustained a friendship long after the Tschicholds emigrated from Germany in 1933. See also Burke 2007: 105; Graeve Ingelmann 2014.

45 "Fototek" advertisement. The book on kitsch photography, referred to in advertisements for "Fototek" as "Das Monströse" (The Monstrous), was to draw from the collection of Austrian journalist and collector Raoul Korty. See Graeve Ingelmann 2014.

46 Moholy-Nagy 1930; Biermann 1930.



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fig. 25 Installation view of Room 1 (Wohin geht die typografische Entwicklung? / Where is Typography Headed?) in the exhibition *Film und Foto*, inaugurated in Stuttgart in 1929. Exhibition design by László Moholy-Nagy. Published in *Schwäbisches Bilderblatt. Wochenschrift zum Stuttgarter Neuen Tagblatt*, 23, 7 June 1929. Stadtarchiv Stuttgart. Photographer unknown

fig. 26 Documentation of El Lissitzky's design of the Soviet section of the 1930 *International Hygiene* exhibition in Dresden, reproduced in the article by Jan Tschichold, "Display that has Dynamic Force: Exhibition Rooms designed by El Lissitzky", *Commercial Art*, January 1931, p. 24.

their ongoing discussions about the nature of photography and relationship between fine and applied art in the late 1920s. In the *Fotomontage* typescript, Tschichold referenced several texts by Moholy-Nagy and Roh to be reprinted or excerpted in his own book:

Roh on the glued photographic image
extreme fantasy with extreme sobriety,
freest composition with realistic imitation
cubist nesting of pure illustrations

Tsch:
“constructivist” versus “organised”⁴⁷

Here, Tschichold quoted directly from Roh's brief discussion of photomontage in his 1925 book, *Nach-Expressionismus: Magischer Realismus. Probleme der neuesten europäischen Malerei* (Post-Expressionism: Magical Realism, Problems of Recent European Painting), which introduced the term “Magical Realism” to describe contemporary trends in painting and, to a lesser extent, photography.⁴⁸ Perhaps Roh's single most enduring idea about photography was that its potency as a tool of communication and means of expression inhered in its contradictions, especially its dual capacity to index objective reality and visualise fantasy. Roh understood photography to be defined as much by its uses – including the arrangement and pasting together of fragments – as by production with a camera or in a darkroom. This was a position with which Tschichold, as a graphic designer, found kinship.

Roh understood photography's social and artistic relevance to reside in its inconsistency. Rather than devise a theory of medium specificity, he raised questions about how a single medium could be used in so many contradictory ways. In Moholy-Nagy's terms, Roh understood photography to be both “reproductive” and “productive”, holding these modes perpetually in tension. This dialectic became embedded in the term *Typophoto* in the late 1920s and early 1930s as a paradigm for verbal-visual communication under the auspices of New Typography.

Roh upheld Moholy-Nagy's photographic work as exemplary of the dialectic inherent in photography. In his introduction to *Moholy-Nagy, 60 Fotos* (1930), Roh championed him as a figure of art historical importance and described photography as follows:

47 “Roh über das Fotoklebebild / äußerste Phantastik bei äußerster Nüchternheit, / freiestes Komponieren bei Wirklichkeitsabklatsch / kubistische Schachtelung bei barem Abbild / Tsch: / “Konstruktivistische” Gestaltung gegenüber “organisistische”. Tschichold n.d. (1930–1931).

48 “Nichts kann so deutlich die völlige Durchdringung der beiden großen Wesenheiten neuester Kunst zeigen: äußerste Phantastik bei äußerster Nüchternheit, freiestes Komponieren bei Wirklichkeitsabklatsch, kubistische Schachtelung bei barem Abbild”. Roh 1925: 46. For an account of the interactions between Franz Roh and Gustav Friedrich Hartlaub, who coined “Neue Sachlichkeit”, and their conceptual overlap, see Fuhrmeister 2015: 41–49.

49 Moholy-Nagy 1930: 6. Emphasis in *italic* is original to Roh's published text.

Experience and formation, that often had been a troubled mixture yesterday, are separated more emphatically today. They are directed to their specific poles and placed in ingenious opposition to each other. The modern emphasize of [sic] problems of form on the one hand (the most liberal and unincumbered possibilities of formation), and on the other hand the keenness with which the concept of “reportage” is emphasised, reportage in all fields, is characteristic. Photography is above all *reporting*. But between reporting and forming (Gestaltung) there is after all only a difference in degree, no absolute distinction.⁴⁹

In proposing that “there is [...] only a difference in degree” and not an “absolute distinction” between reportage and Gestaltung, he identified poles located at opposite ends of a spectrum of photographic representation. Like Moholy-Nagy, Roh understood photographic “Realism” to be predicated on, rather than undermined by, the choices of photographers, including mechanical and chemical manipulations. The dual capacity for reportage and abstraction enabled photography to create reality, rather than merely represent it.

Tschichold borrowed Roh’s theory of photography as a more sophisticated framework for defending *Typophoto* in visual communication than he had initially proposed. He came to understand objective visual communication and propaganda not as opposites, but as two poles on a spectrum of graphic representation. Although he had emphatically declared the photographic halftone and sans serif type as equivalently “objective”, he also acknowledged photography and typography as fundamentally different modes of representation that fused in dynamic contrast.⁵⁰ His notes for *Fotomontage* suggest that, in the years just after the publication of his first book, he continued to reflect on reading as a process of optical and cognitive negotiation between photographic and typographic communication. Despite its decisive tone, *Die neue Typographie* had posed unresolved questions about how images and text work together – or clash – in representing and conveying information. Perhaps most importantly for New Typography, Roh acknowledged Functionalism and Surrealism as two sides of the same coin: an idea succinctly expressed as “Magical Realism”.⁵¹ He and Tschichold shared a belief that Surrealist expression was latent in photography’s trustworthiness, which Tschichold came to understand as key to the efficacy of *Typophoto*.

50 Tschichold 1987 (1928): 96.

51 Roh 1925.

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