

Tschichold's Links to the Czechoslovak Avant-Garde

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In 1918 Czechoslovakia became independent. Shortly afterwards, in 1919, the Bauhaus school was founded in Weimar, and Jan Tschichold acquired his first professional competences in typography, decorative types, calligraphy and book design at the Staatliche Akademie für graphische Künste und Buchgewerbe (State Academy for Graphic Arts and Book Production) in Leipzig and the Kunstgewerbeschule (School of Arts and Crafts) in Dresden.¹

After World War I, Czechoslovakia emerged from the multi-ethnic Austro-Hungarian monarchy and embarked on the path of an independent democratic republic. Even in the cultural field, it was gradually opening to modernising tendencies, which represented a new restart and, in visual terms, declared a break with the conservative traditions of the old monarchy. For most Czechoslovakians, German was no obstacle, as the country continued to have a relatively large and influential German minority. Despite Czechoslovakia's territorial autonomy, not only the transport but also the cultural infrastructure of the larger cities (with bilingual Czech/German names such as Praha/Prag, Brno/Brünn, Plzeň/Pilsen, Liberec/Reichenberg, Teplice/Teplitz, Bratislava/Pressburg, Moravská Ostrava/Mährisch Ostrau) remained closely linked to Austrian and German cities, such as Wien, Munich, Berlin, Dresden, Leipzig, and Breslau.

Cultural exchange between Czechoslovakia, Austria and Germany continued to be intense, albeit with a certain degree of political caution and distance, even as the young Czechoslovakia searched for its own distinctive and recognisable identity.² Through a network of personal relationships – often based on collegial relationships between (former) schoolmates – the art scene in Czechoslovakia was continuously and naturally connected with Austrian and German artists, designers and architects of the Art Nouveau and Cubo-Expressionist generations, and later also with young followers of functionalism. In the 1920s and 1930s, there was a clear awareness of the German Neue Sachlichkeit (New Objectivity)³ and the modernisation reforms set in motion in German schools at the initiative of Hermann Muthesius and the Deutscher Werkbund. So-called Czech, Moravian and Slovak Germans and Jews often identified themselves artistically with the Neue Sachlichkeit (New Objectivity). On the local level, the semi-autonomous Czech-German Werkbund was created, following Muthesius' example⁴ and especially the official – state-protected – *Svaz československého díla* (Czechoslovak Werkbund), which clearly adhered to effective elementary forms of international functionalism towards the end of the 1920s. The magazine *Die Form*,⁵ the promotion platform

¹ Jong 2008.

² Bartlová and Vybíral 2015; Knobloch and Vondráček 2016.

³ Habán 2018.

⁴ Janatková 2018.

of the Deutscher Werkbund, was also known and read in Czechoslovakia, as were a wide variety of other European avant-garde magazines.⁶ The clearly structured graphic design of *Die Form* was certainly inspiring for comparable association magazines (for instance, *Výtvarné snahy* and *Panorama*) and books devoted to home culture, designed by Ladislav Sutnar.

For the Czechoslovak interwar avant-garde, the Bauhaus school was gaining particular attention. Its *Bauhausbücher* (Bauhaus Books) series was part of the local libraries and soon became an inspirational model for many graphic designers and typographers.⁷ The Bauhaus reformist conception and elementary aesthetics advocated and promoted by Tschichold were also followed by some newly established schools, especially the Škola uměleckých řemesel (School of Arts and Crafts) in Bratislava, and partly also the Škola uměleckých řemesel in Brno and the Škola umění (School of Art) in Zlín.

In addition, several students from Czechoslovakia attended the Bauhaus.⁸ Karel Teige – without any doubt the leading personality of the Czechoslovak avant-garde of the 1920s and 1930s – gave a comprehensive lecture entitled “Towards a Sociology of Architecture” in Dessau in early 1930, at the invitation of Hannes Meyer.⁹ As can be seen from the above, the cultural “climate” in Czechoslovakia was conducive to an understanding of Tschichold’s progressivist views, which, among other things, the author summarised in the pages of *Die neue Typographie*, and was well informed. Supported by contemporary sources and a relatively rich secondary literature, the following sub-chapters will present a selection of topics that are closely related to Tschichold’s reception in Czechoslovakia.¹⁰

A Typographic Revolution? Teige, Štyrský, Toyen and Odeon Publishing House

A key figure in the Czechoslovak avant-garde, who was thoroughly informed about Tschichold’s views and ideological positions in the field of graphic design, was his generational contemporary Karel Teige (1900–1951). The Czech left-leaning critic, a theorist active in disciplines ranging from

free art, design and home culture to architectural theory, was also a practising artist and graphic designer. László Moholy-Nagy reportedly described him as the most informed European artist.¹¹ On the Czech cultural scene, Teige was the main initiator of the formation of the important avant-garde group Devětsil (literally meaning “nine forces”, was an association of Czech avant-garde artists), whose aim was to bring art to the widest possible audience, initially mainly the proletariat. In 1922, the same year the group was founded, the magazines *Devětsil* and *Život* (Life) were published, on the initiative of Karel Teige and with the help of the group members.¹² In 1923, the

5 The cover of the magazine *Die Form* was made in the sober spirit of the New Typography (first designed by Joost Schmidt, after 1928 by Walter Drexler). Together with Walter Drexler, Paul Renner and others, Jan Tschichold took part in a competition for a magazine cover. On the competition, see *Die Form* 1928: 368–372.

6 On the network of relationships that was formed, among other things, through the international exchange of Modernist journals, see Ingerle and Česálková 2014; De Puineuf 2015.

7 Svobodová 2016.

8 *Ibid.*; Prešnajderová, Běrešová and De Puineuf 2021. Originally from Czechoslovakia, Jindřich Koch, Zdeněk Rossmann, Marie Doležalová-Rossmannová, Ladislav Foltýn and Irena Blüňová studied at the Bauhaus.

9 Švácha 1998.

10 Given the breadth of the topic and the necessary limitation of the text, this is a rather radical, simplifying selection.

11 Knobloch 2016.

12 *Život* 1922; Toman 2015.

first issue of the international review *Disk* followed.¹³ (fig. 27) In addition to the Prague core of the Devětsil group, which was joined in 1923 by painters Jindřich Štyrský and Toyen (Marie Čermínová),¹⁴ an active and distinctive Brno branch of Devětsil¹⁵ was gradually formed in 1924, encouraged by the main protagonists Artuš Černík and Jaroslav B. Svrček and the left-wing theoretician Bedřich Václavek. In the spring of 1924, the first issue of the international journal *Pásmo* (The Zone) was published with a cover designed by Eduard Stavinoha. It became a polemical-critical platform, the size of a newspaper leaflet. *Pásmo* became a tribune of Constructivism, Poeticism and Futurism directed against the “anachronistic” Cubism; the second issue was devoted to the question of modern advertising and typography.¹⁶ From 1925 onwards, Zdeněk Rossmann also participated in the activities of the Brno Devětsil, but even before he became a follower of Tschichold, he co-created masks, posters and invitations for the “eccentric carnivals” of the Brno Devětsil artists.

In the first sections of the *Die neue Typographie*, Tschichold dealt, among other things, with the “history of the new typography”, in which he drew attention to the relatively progressive steps leading to the “typographic revolution and the orthography of free expression”. In this context, he drew attention to the graphic practices of the Wiener Werkstätte¹⁷ printmakers, who favoured spare abstract-geometric décor to the early works of Peter Behrens, but also to the typographic practices of the Italian Futurist Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, who radically subverted the rules of traditional symmetrical typesetting and text block in order to test the limits of legibility and the possibilities of meaning of words with visual expression. Marinetti's *parole in libertà* (words in freedom / mots en liberté), Apollinaire's *Calligrammes*, the Dada-typographic “circus of dynamic values”, montages, and the exploration of abstract signs, symbols, pictograms, and ideograms created a new experimental grammar for the research typographer.

Teige and the members of Devětsil developed these impulses in an original way in the first half of the 1920s. Teige attempted a kind of local alternative to international Modernist tendencies, which he called “Poetism”.¹⁸ The aim of the avant-garde conception of Devětsil – and of Poetism – was to combine

rational construction with emotional poetry, the objective meaning of words with imagination.¹⁹ Traditional artistic genres, such as painting on canvas or bronze sculpture, were viewed with a certain contempt by left-wing avant-garde positions as elitist objects in gallery halls that belonged to the past. The artefact of the present, on the other hand, could become the everyday object: the poster, the advertisement, the book – the results of a collective multi-genre collaboration, which, moreover, reach the widest audience.

Teige had the bold plan to replace the hanging image with a “typographic poem” or “pictorial poem”

13 The magazine *Disk. Internacionální revue* (Disc. International Magazine) was published in two issues (no. 1, 1923; no. 2, 1925), edited by Jaromír Krejcar, and published by U.S. Devětsil, in Prague–Brno. The cover was first designed by Karel Teige, the second edition was redesigned by Zdeněk Rossmann.

14 Toyen, born Marie Čermínová (1902 Prague – 1980 Paris), was a Czech-French painter. She was a member of Devětsil and worked in the vein of Poetism, imaginative abstraction and Surrealism. From 1947 until the end of her life she worked in France, where she was in close contact with André Breton and Benjamin Péret. See Šrp 2000; Huebner 2020; Pravdová, Le Brun and Görgen-Lammers 2021.

15 Ingerle and Česáková 2014; Ingerle 2019.

16 Kassák 1925.

17 Cooperative enterprise for crafts and design founded in Vienna.

18 Chvatík and Pešat 1967.

19 Teige 1927.

(*obrazová báseň*) that would carry a textual message, while also containing the evocative power and potency of the image. In 1923, he wrote:

We feel that the tableau, within the limits of its convention, however revolutionarily altered, no longer satisfies us. Our thirst for images and our need for artistic enjoyment are satiated by picture magazines [...] the poster is a modern and ephemeral fresco, a magnificent art of agitation. It has an extensiveness and intensity worthy of its time, a modern pathos, an exact refinement, clarity and synoptic distinctness. [...] Painting is dying as the last manufactory [...] Poetry is the only art of the constructive age [...]. Poetism arrives at a fusion of image and poem. Today we are trying to create a new form of image and poem – the pictorial poem.²⁰

The pictorial poem (*obrazová báseň*) in which the two finished arts came together, and which could be as striking and seductive as a poster in its effect, strongly affected the artists of Devětsil, in particular Jindřich Štyrský and Toyen.²¹ For their book covers, they purposefully worked with tension, visual contrasts and paradoxical juxtapositions made possible by photo/typo/montage. In 1928, Tschichold specifically drew attention to three early works by Štyrský and Toyen.²² The graphic design historian Jindřich Toman states that Honzl's *Roztočené jeviště* (The Spinning Stage) and Nezval's *Menší růžová zahrada* (A Smaller Rose Garden) have no significant parallels in European book design; according to Toman, only Rodtchenko's photomontages for *Pro eto* (About This) from 1923 can be compared to them.²³ (figs. 28–29)

Toyen was particularly active in the field of book design, designing covers and illustrations for both large publishers and limited editions of bibliophile books. Rather than austere Constructivism, she was closer to the Dadaist-Surrealist position, and had an extraordinary sense of the evocation of the uncanny. She illustrated several children's books, but her lapidary line drawings also furnished several private erotic editions.²⁴ Toyen also collaborated directly with Teige as illustrator on several books. Two books

in particular come to mind, in which Teige used Tschicholdian minimalist graphic design with lower-case types, and Toyen accompanied the text with abstract drawings of eerie fragments of disintegrating bodies.²⁵ (fig. 30) At a time when she was already close to phantomatic Surrealism, she collaborated artistically on the children's book *Náš svět* (Our World)²⁶ with Ladislav Sutnar and depicted in it the seemingly relaxed atmosphere of the modern world with its technical conveniences – cars, aeroplanes, the gramophone. For the cover of Jean Giono's book *Zelené mládí* (Blue Boy / Jean le bleu), Toyen chose a well-known photograph by Max Burchartz of a girl with a mesmerising look.²⁷

20 "Cítíme, že nás tabulový obraz v mezích své konvence, třebaš nejrevolučněji pozměněný již neuspokojuje. Naši obrazovou žízeň a potřebu výtvarného požitku sytí obrázkové magazíny... plakát je moderní a efemérní freskou, velkolepým uměním agitačním. Má extensitu a intensitu důstojnou své doby, moderní pathos, exaktní rafinovanost, srozumitelnost a synoptickou zřetelnost. [...] Malířství zmírání jako poslední manufaktura...Poesie jest jediným uměním konstruktivní doby [...]. Poetismus dospívá k fúzi obrazu a básně. Pokoušíme se dnes vytvořit nový tvar obrazu a básně – obrazové básně." Teige 1927.

21 Bydžovská and Srp 2003.

22 Nezval 1924; Nezval 1926; Honzl 1925.

23 Toman 2021.

24 Sade 1932.

25 Neumann 1931; Neumann 1932.

26 Marčanová 1934.

27 Giono 1934. Burchartz's photograph, or detail of the eye, was used by Zdeněk Rossmann in his book *Písmo a fotografie v reklamě*, Index, Olomouc 1938. See Čisár 2015.



 27

fig. 27 Front cover of the magazine *Život*. *Sborník nové krásy* (Life. An Anthology of the New Beauty), 2, 1922. It was edited by Bedřich Feuerstein, Jaroslav Krejcar, Josef Šíma and Karel Teige, published by Umělecká beseda (Artistic Society) typography by Karel Teige, photomontage by Feuerstein, Krejcar, Šíma and Teige. Photo by Vincent Levrat



28



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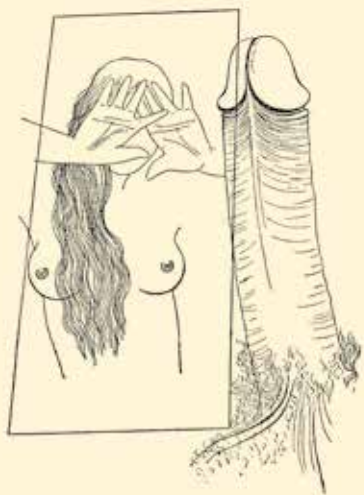


fig. 28 Jindřich Honzl, *Roztočené jeviště* (The Spinning Stage), Jan Fromek-Odeon, Prague 1925. Typography by Karel Teige, cover by Štyrský and Toyen. Photo by Vincent Levrat

fig. 29 Vítězslav Nezval, *Menší růžová zahrada* (A Smaller Rose Garden), Odeon, Prague, 1926. Typography by Karel Teige, cover by Štyrský and Toyen. Photo by Vincent Levrat

fig. 30 Markýz de Sade (Marquis de Sade), *Justina, čili, Prokletí ctnosti* (Justine, or The Misfortunes of Virtue), Edice 69, Jindřich Štyrský, Prague 1932. Typography and illustrations by Toyen.

30

A number of books that correspond to Teige's concept of the pictorial poem were produced with the support of the publisher Jan Fromek and his publishing house Odeon²⁸ in the first half of the 1920s. In the bibliography of *Die neue Typographie*, Tschichold highlights six books produced in the close circle of Karel, Devětsil and Odeon.²⁹ All of the Czechoslovak examples reflect what Tschichold considered a "book typographic revolution", acting as a kind of catalyst, a temporarily tumultuous, cleansing phase between the old typography and the prospective project of a disciplined, normative new typography.³⁰ (fig. 31)

Between 1927 and 1931, thirty issues of the magazine *ReD* (*Revue Svazu Moderní Kultury Devětsil / Review of the Union for Modern Culture Devětsil*), whose editor and typographer was Teige, were published by Odeon. (fig. 32) *ReD*, with its textual content and visual form, became an important intersection of the European avant-garde. Teige often reinforced the punchiness with intense blush and chose a robust stencil font for the magazine's title. His intention was to move as far away as possible from the Morrisian ideal of decorative, elitist bibliophilia, and instead to clearly demonstrate the spirit of social progress and revolution. On the recommendation of Tschichold, Teige took part in some of the activities of the Ring "Neue Werbegestalter" (Circle "New Advertising Designers"), after 1928,³¹ although he was not a nominal member of the association in the same way as Lajos Kassák or El Lissitzky.

Excursus. The First Czech Photomontage (1922) and Tschichold

Tschichold repeatedly reproduced the typo-photomontage that appeared on the cover of the magazine *Život* (Life) by four contemporaries from the Devětsil group – Bedřich Feuerstein, Jaromír Krejcar, Josef Šíma and Teige. The first Czech photomontage cover shows part of a fluted Doric column and a car wheel with a sea surface background.³² As previously mentioned,

the authors here freely referred to motifs coming from the Purist magazine *L'Esprit nouveau*, in which in 1921 the editors placed photographs of an ancient temple and a modern automobile side by side, as examples of a perfectly organised order. Le Corbusier later commented on the similar comparison, observing that even "Phidias would have liked to live in a standardised age".³³

The photomontage in question was reproduced in Tschichold's *Die neue Typographie* in 1928 (p. 207) and was subsequently reproduced in a limited selection of seventy-six recent photographic works in Franz Roh and Tschichold's *Foto-Auge* (Photo-Eye) book, printed in lower-case types. In the preface, Roh stated about the experimental possibilities of the photographic medium:

²⁸ Hubatová-Vacková 2018a.

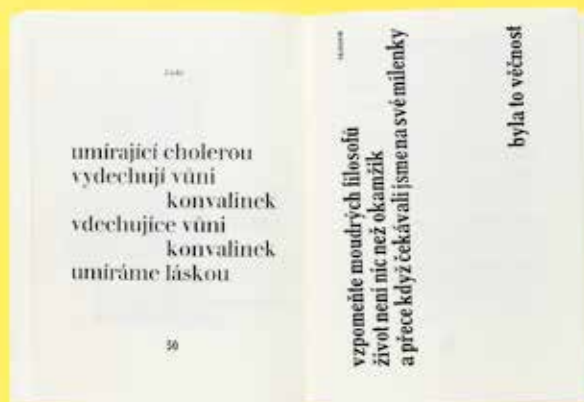
²⁹ The six books are: issue no. 2, 1922, of the magazine *Život*. *Sborník nové krásy*; Vítězslav Nezval, *Pantomima* (Ústřední studentské knihkupectví a nakladatelství, Prague 1924); Karel Teige, *Film* (Václav Petr, Prague 1925); Jindřich Honzl, *Roztočené jeviště* (Jan Fromek-Odeon, Prague 1925); Jaroslav Seifert, *Na vlnách TSF* (Václav Petr, Prague 1925); and Vítězslav Nezval, *Menší růžová zahrada* (Odeon, Prague 1926).

³⁰ Rous 2021.

³¹ Srp, Bydžovská and Bregantová 2009. In 1928, many advocates of the New Typography belonged to the Ring "Neue Werbegestalter" (Circle "New Advertising Designers"), which eventually included twenty-five members. Founded by Kurt Schwitters, the main purpose of this association was to promote the work of its members (Willi Baumeister, Max Burchartz, Walter Dexel, Hans Leistikow, Robert Michel, Georg Trump, César Domela, Piet Zwart, Paul Schuitema). From 1928 until 1931 the Ring sponsored meetings, exhibitions and design conferences.

³² Toman 2009.

³³ Le Corbusier 1923.



31



fig. 31 Inside pages of the book by Jaroslav Seifert, *Na vlnách TSF* (On the Waves of the Télégraphie Sans Fil), Václav Petr, Prague 1925 (reprint). Typography and cover by Karel Teige. Photo by Vincent Levrat

fig. 32 *RED. Měsíčník pro moderní kulturu* (RED. Monthly for Modern Culture), 7, April 1928, cover by Karel Teige (typographic composition) and Jaroslav Rössler (photomontage).

[...] there is furthermore the combination of photography with graphic art or painting to point to, of which examples are given (see Max Ernst marvellous works). To maintain that there is a mingling and heterogeneous element that can never combine is but an empty doctrine.³⁴

While some photomontages, according to Roh, suggested decomposition – the demolition of form, a chaotic whirl – others show systematic construction and an almost classic moderation and calm. Roh illustrated this visual calm with a reference to a photomontage from the magazine *Život*.

“The Leading Graphic Artist of Today’s Germany”.

Reception of Tschichold in Czechoslovakia

Signed “Ivan Tschichold”, a study entitled “Nová Tvorba” (The New Work) was published in the specialist journal *Typografia*, a translation from the German *Typographische Mitteilungen*, which briefly put into the Czech context the ideas that were later published comprehensively in the book *Die neue Typographie*.³⁵

In the Czech periodical press, Tschichold was mentioned in connection with the *Werbewissenschaftliche Woche* (Advertising Week) exhibition in Munich. A short article entitled “Vědecký týden o reklamě v Mnichově” (Scientific Week on Advertising in Munich)³⁶ drew attention to specific stimulating speakers and also mentioned Tschichold by name, who gave a lecture entitled “On the Good Use of Photography and Typography in Advertising”.

In the same magazine, *Výtvarné snahy* (Art Endeavors) which was edited by a trio of avant-garde Czechs – the theoretician Karel Herain, the educator Josef Vydra and the graphic designer Ladislav Sutnar – translated excerpts from Tschichold’s book *Die neue Typographie* were published (in Czech under the title *Nová typografie*).³⁷ They were divided into several subchapters based on the content of the book for the sake of clarity. In the same issue of the journal, Tschichold’s essay was followed by a text consistently set in lower-case type and entitled “Ještě nové písmo. Příspěvek k otázce nového písma” (Another new font. Contribution to the issue of the new alphabet),³⁸ in which Tschichold promoted “the eradication of the double alphabet and the radical use of only lower-case letters”. In this article, he drew attention to several authors who had put the lower-case type print into practice and tried out the “utopian reform of typography”. While “albers, renner and the author of the typeface of the art school in halle assume the use of both alphabets” and “Schwitters again uses only capital letters”, according to Tschichold, three authors, “bayer, burchartz and teige”, had so far attempted a more consistent use of lower-case type.³⁹

Surprisingly, Tschichold’s attempts at reform in the field of typography can also be traced outside the avant-garde professional journals, even in the antagonistic field of opinion represented by, for example, the agrarian conservative press *Venkov* (Countryside). Given the publication of the text, it is indeed surprising that a relatively detailed critical analysis of Tschichold’s practices, intended for a

34 Roh and Tschichold 1929

35 Tschichold 1927.

36 *Výtvarné snahy* 1927–1928.

37 Tschichold 1929–1930a, b, c. The magazine *Výtvarné snahy* was a monthly art magazine dedicated to art work, drawing and vocational education, and was associated with the Czechoslovak Werkbund. Its editors were Karel Herain, Josef Vydra and the graphic designer Ladislav Sutnar, who was also the author of the graphic design of the magazine.

38 Tschichold 1929–1930b.

39 *Ibid.*

readership of rural officials and farmers, could have been potentially interesting, comprehensible and relevant to this social segment as well. The article in the agrarian newspaper was a direct response to Tschichold's contributions published in the pages of *Výtvarné snahy*, and read:

Jan Tschichold, a German modern graphic artist, a Bauhaus follower, provides here [...] two essays contributing to the present problem of new typography, and then to the solution of a new typeface.⁴⁰

The author of the contribution to the agrarian press commented with a sharp criticism and disbelief on the proposals for a “modern simplified printing typeface”, which he glossed as follows:

In agreement with the German type reformers, Tschichold rejects the use of double alphabets, and himself constructs a new type of them from the straight line and the circle, based on minuscules.⁴¹

The author harshly criticised the use of lower-case letters for lack of clarity – even in Czech, where capital letters are only used at the beginning of a sentence.

In the autumn of 1930, the *Nový plakát* (New Poster) exhibition was held in Prague, and it was a travelling collection of modern posters compiled by Tschichold.⁴² (**figs. 33–34**) In 1931 the same exhibition proba-

bly travelled to Brno⁴³ and perhaps also in Bratislava. Ladislav Sutnar was included in the selection, which represented modern posters in the spirit of the New Typography.⁴⁴ At the beginning of 1931, Tschichold visited Czechoslovakia.⁴⁵ Sutnar welcomed him at the Prague railway station; on 3 January he gave a lecture on photomontage in the same city,⁴⁶ and on 5 January another in Brno on the normalisation of typography.⁴⁷ The press gave it a positive review, commenting:

Tschichold's lecture was one of the most important events of the cultural season. Clearly and convincingly presented, in a concise form and supported by a large number of well-chosen slides [...]. The lecturer, who is well known as the author of excellent books on modern typography and photography, is now rightly considered an “authority”.⁴⁸

However, the author of the text hinted at a certain risk of Tschichold's declared normative typographic methods, which in their result could lead

40 “[...] dvě stati přispívající k přítomnému problému nové typografie, a potom k řešení nového písma”, *Venkov* 1930.

41 “V soulase s německými reformátory písma Tschichold zahrnuje užívání dvojí abecedy, a sám konstruuje nový jejich typ z přímků a kroužků, vycházejí z minusculí”. *Venkov* 1930.

42 Tschichold 1930a.

43 *Výstava soudobého plakátu* (Brno, Vaňkova galerie, 1931). Sylvestrová and Toman 2015.

44 The authors of the exhibited works were Arp, Baumberger, Baumeister, Bayer, Burchartz, Cassandre, Cyliax, Dexel, Lissitzky, Moholy-Nagy, Molzahn, Schawinsky, Schlemmer, Schuitema, Sutnar, Tschichold, Zwart.

45 Teige 1931; Šrp, Bydžovská and Bregantová 2009.

46 Tschichold's lecture in Prague was organised by Svaz československého díla (Czechoslovak Werkbund), the Spolek faktorů a spolek Typografia (Factor Society and the Typography Society), Dům zemědělské osvěty (House of Agricultural Enlightenment).

47 Tschichold's lecture in Brno was organised by the branches of the above-mentioned organisations together with the Brno group of Index and Levá fronta (Left Front).

48 “Tschicholdova přednáška byla jednou z nejvýznamnějších událostí kulturní sezony. Jasně a přesvědčivě přednesená, ve stručné formě a doložená velkým počtem vhodné vybraných světelných obrazů [...]. Přednášející, jenž je dobře znám jako autor znamenitých knih o moderní typografii a fotografii, platí dnes už právem za ‘autoritu’”. Teige 1931.



33



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figs. 33–34

Cover and spread from Jan Tschichold, *Nový plakát*, exhibition catalogue (Prague, Alšova síň, 9 – 29 November 1930), Umělecká beseda, Prague 1930.

to “the fact that these principles could dry up into rules and regulations and eventually become a straitjacket for typographic invention”.⁴⁹

In 1931 or 1932, Tschichold went to Bratislava, where he was invited by Josef Vydra to give a lecture at the Škola umeleckých remesiel (School of Arts and Crafts).⁵⁰ Also in Slovakia, Tschichold had his followers in personalities such as Zdeněk Rossmann, Ľudovít Fulla, Ladislav Csáder and Józef Rybak, who worked for the *Slovenská Grafia* magazine.⁵¹ Probably on the occasion of the lecture, Tschichold presented an exhibition of posters in Bratislava at the same time.⁵²

Typographic System: Zdeněk Rossmann, Ladislav Sutnar, Josef Sudek and Krásná jizba Družstevní práce Association

Rossmann, who had met Tschichold in Brno and Bratislava, and Sutnar followed the rules of the New Typography consistently.⁵³ In the field of visual communication, Sutnar concentrated on precision and clarity of visual perception, using sans serif types, diagonals, asymmetry, contrast and a limited basic colour scale. As the artistic director of the Krásná jizba Družstevní práce Association and working with the photographer Josef Sudek, he developed sophisticated advertising strategies including posters and window display designs⁵⁴ based on Tschichold's premises and the Neue Sachlichkeit.⁵⁵

In Tschichold's book *Eine Stunde Druckgestaltung*, the works of Rossmann and Sutnar were reproduced alongside the first Czech photomontage from the 1922 *Život* magazine.⁵⁶ According to the design historian Iva Knobloch, who has long been interested in Sutnar's graphic work, in 1934 Sutnar asked Teige to hold an exhibition of his graphic work.⁵⁷ His edited speech was later published in *Panorama* magazine.⁵⁸ Teige emphasised consistency, maturity, clarity, sophistication, and systematicity in Sutnar's approach. According to Teige, certain typographic works can be categorised as “artistic creation”; conversely, he classified Sutnar's as a sophisticated “scientific project”. Within this rational scientific framework of typography, Sutnar, like Tschichold,⁵⁹ dealt with data visualisation and so-called pictorial statistics in the context of Neurath's Isotype system.⁶⁰

In the book entitled *Malá vlastivěda* (Little Civics Reader), Sutnar co-operated with the graphic designer Augustin Tschinkel to process complex statistical data obtained from the census in Czechoslovakia in the form of infographic systems.

Epilogue: The Aged Avant-Gardist in Prague Again

Between the wars, Tschichold had close professional ties with personalities such as Teige, Sutnar, Rossmann, Vydra and František Kalivoda.⁶¹ For at least two decades after 1945, he was in contact with František Muzika, Method Kaláb and Jan Rajlich Sr, who in 1963 founded the Internation-

49 “[...]že by tyto principy mohly seschnouti v pravidla a regule a býti posléze svěřací kazajkou typografické invenci”. Teige 1931.

50 Prešnajderová, Bérešová and De Puineuf 2021.

51 Longauer 2013.

52 *Výstavu plakátů J. Tschicholda* (Exhibition of Posters by Jan Tschichold), Umělecká beseda slovenská (Slovak Art Council), Bratislava, 1 November – 1 December 1932.

53 Janáková 2003.

54 Hubatová-Vacková 2021.

55 Vlčková 2006; Hubatová-Vacková 2018b; Vlčková and Hekrdlová 2019.

56 Tschichold 1930b.

57 Knobloch 2010.

58 Teige 1934.

59 Männen-Helfen 1932 (cover by Jan Tschichold).

60 Mendel 1935 (graphic design and pictorial statistics made by Ladislav Sutnar in collaboration with Augustin Tschinkel).

61 On Jan Tschichold's contacts with František Kalivoda see Svobodová 2011.

al Biennial of Graphic Design held in Brno.⁶² As is well known, in the 1940s Tschichold began to distance himself from the avant-garde. When he came to Prague in 1965, he presented a paper entitled “Význam tradice pro typografii” (The Importance of Tradition for Typography) at the Památník národního písemnictví (National Literature Institute).⁶³ The lecture was attended by his former friends, who, just like Tschichold, were avant-gardists who had grown old. Among them was František Muzika, a former member of the avant-garde group Devětsil, who, like Tschichold, turned to the historical type models of the past.⁶⁴ Tschichold donated to Muzika his book on the alphabets of the past with the dedication “To their dear friend František Muzika from Jan and Edith Tschichold, December 1965”.⁶⁵

62 Rajlich 2005.

63 Tschichold 1965b.

64 Muzika 1958.

65 Tschichold 1965a. A copy from the library of the Uměleckoprůmyslové museum in Prague states: “Ihrem lieben Freund František Muzika von Jan und Edith Tschichold, Dezember 1965”.

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