

The “New Direction” at the Basel School of Design of the 1930s

Sandra Bischler-Hartmann

The Basel School of Design – or, as it was officially called from 1886 to 1980, the Arts and Crafts Department of the Allgemeine Gewerbeschule (AGS) Basel – is considered one of the most relevant educational institutions when it comes to teaching mid-20th century Swiss Style graphic design and typography. In a comprehensive study on Swiss graphic design published in 2006, design historian Richard Hollis emphasised the essential contribution of AGS Basel's teaching to the “growth of an international style”.¹ However, the focus of design history on the AGS Basel as the “Swiss Style School” has obscured the view on its institutional history and the origins of graphic design education there. It is lesser known that the school's graphic design teaching did not emerge parallel to the consolidation of the Swiss Style during the 1950s, but comes from a much longer tradition, with its first full-time graphic design programme dating back as early as 1915. This text will briefly outline how this programme came to be founded and what understanding of graphic design it was based on. It will then focus on the period of the late 1920s and 1930s as a case study and show that those years marked a period of great change – and exchange – in terms of graphic design pedagogy.

The AGS Basel was founded in 1886 by nationalising an existing private drawing school. Like many arts and crafts schools founded in late 19th-century Europe, the school's initial purpose was to provide drawing lessons for a variety of professions, with the goal to improve the general design quality of manufactured goods by providing arts and crafts training to young professionals. In the first three decades after its foundation, the AGS Basel mainly offered open, unspecialised, drawing courses, in which the imitation of historical models and the design of ornaments played an important role. About thirty years later, in the course of the school's major reorganisation in 1915, a specialised, full-time graphic design programme was established: the *Fachklasse für Graphik* (Specialised Class of Graphic Design). The programme was the school's reaction to a completely new professional profile that had emerged since the beginning of the century:

that of the graphic designer – a professional working exclusively on applied tasks such as posters, advertisements, logo design, package design etc. The teachers of the Graphic Design course were now experienced graphic designers and printers. Also, a design made in class was no longer an end, but was executed in the final material in the school's workshops.² Paul Kammüller

¹ See the chapter *Basel: Hofmann and Ruder* in Hollis 2006: 214–221. Hollis focuses on teachers Emil Ruder and Armin Hofmann, whose courses, starting in the 1940s, were crucial for the success of Swiss Style graphic design and typography.

² STABS, *Erziehung NN 22*, Hermann Kienzle, Die Schülersausstellung der Allg. Gewerbeschule, Manuscript, 1923: 5–6.

became the first main teacher at the Graphic Design course, teaching poster and package design. Kammüller himself had completed his training at AGS Basel around the turn of the century, before there had been any specialised graphic design courses. He had first been a painter, then a graphic designer and, according to his supervisor, AGS Basel director Hermann Kienzle, held the conviction that graphic design was primarily an artistic matter.³

Contrary to that, Kienzle, who had been director of the AGS Basel since 1916, found that graphic designers had to put artistic aspirations and individual expression in the background. Graphic design had first and foremost to fulfil its purpose – that is, the communicative or advertising function.⁴ Kienzle remained the director of AGS Basel for almost thirty years until his retirement in 1944 and, parallel to that, was also the director of the affiliated Arts and Crafts Museum, the Gewerbemuseum Basel. During the 1920s and 1930s, Kienzle and his museum assistant Georg Schmidt – both trained art historians – initiated several ground-breaking exhibitions reflecting the above-mentioned functionalist attitude. These included the exhibitions *Neue Typographie* (New Typography) in 1927, and *Neue Werbegraphik* (New Graphic Design) in 1930. The museum's intense collaboration with Jan Tschichold also began during the 1920s. Tschichold had already become one of the spokesmen of the New Typography movement and was teaching typography and lettering at the Meisterschule für Deutschlands Buchdrucker (Master School for Germany's Book Printers) in Munich at the time. He contributed some of his typographic works to the Basel *Neue Typographie* exhibition and, for *Neue Werbegraphik*, he made the selection of posters to be displayed from his own collection, compiled the exhibition catalogue and designed its cover.⁵ He also published a text in the same catalogue in which he introduced visitors to the design principles of the New Typographers, who preferred “impersonal” sans serif typefaces and “objective” imagery, meaning photography instead of illustration.⁶

After *Neue Typographie*, the Gewerbemuseum also held the Deutscher Werkbund's exhibitions *Neues Bauen* (New Building) in 1928, and *Die neue Fotografie* (New Photography) in 1931.⁷ In 1929, the museum was the first venue for the *Bauhaus Dessau* travelling exhibition. From 1927 the Bauhaus was headed by Basel-based architect Hannes Meyer, whose radical

reorientation of design pedagogy and theory was presented in the catalogue of the 1929 Gewerbemuseum exhibition by Ernst Kállai. Design, he wrote, was not the task of an individual artist-personality, but a cooperative work.⁸ According to Hannes Meyer, “pure construction” had to be the main characteristic of a new, progressive world of forms.⁹ Part of the exhibition was dedicated to the Bauhaus advertising department's teaching under Joost Schmidt, who taught geometrically constructed letterforms, as can be found in the exhibition poster by Bauhaus student Franz Ehrlich.¹⁰ (fig. 46)

3 STABS, *ED-REG* 8, 4–1, Hermann Kienzle, Brief an Regierungsrat Fr. Hauser. betr. Stundenpläne Sommer Sem. 1940. Basel, 20 February 1940: 3.

4 Kienzle 1929: 56.

5 Gewerbemuseum Basel 1927.

6 “Wie sich der neue typografische Gestalter beim Schriftplakat der unpersönlichen Grotesk als Type bedient, so verwendet er beim Bildplakat unpersönliche, ‘objektive,’ sachliche Darstellungen: vorzugsweise die Fotografie”. Tschichold 1930: n.p.

7 In 1933, the Gewerbemuseum Basel hosted the exhibition *Die neue Fotografie in der Schweiz* (The New Photography in Switzerland).

8 Kállai 1929: n.p.

9 Meyer 1926: 221–222.

10 As for Schmidt's teaching, see Brüning 1995: 193.

The Gewerbemuseum and the AGS were located in the same building in the old city centre of Basel, which enabled teachers and students to have low-threshold access to the ideas and design approaches presented in the museum. The museum direction was convinced that the New Typography would prevail, especially in the design fields which “depend on motion, colour and power of impact, that is, in the field of advertising in the broadest sense”.¹¹ Since the AGS graphic design programme was the place where advertising in the broadest sense was taught, it was clear that the New Typography had to be integrated into its teaching. Accordingly, in 1929, Hermann Kienzle proclaimed a new orientation of the AGS's graphic design pedagogy in the German trade journal *Archiv für Buchgewerbe und Gebrauchsgraphik* which corresponded to the demands of the New Typography, announcing the integration of the previously non-existent subjects of typography and photography into the curriculum of graphic design students.¹²

The exhibitions and published statements mentioned above already suggest that there was an internal strategy at AGS to align the school's pedagogic concept with the avant-garde ideas. Another indicator is Hermann Kienzle's personnel policy during the 1930s. Letters that Kienzle wrote to the school's committee give evidence of his goal to reduce the influence of the main teacher of the graphic design programme, Kammüller, in favour of younger, more progressive teachers who were proponents of the “new direction” in graphic design.¹³ During the 1930s, the AGS Basel hired many designers who had participated in the 1927 *Neue Typographie* (New Typography) exhibition: the graphic designers Theo Ballmer and Ernst Keiser, the painter and graphic designer Max Sulzbachner and the architect Ernst Mumenthaler.¹⁴ Jan Tschichold also began teaching at the AGS Basel through the mediation of Hermann Kienzle, after his forced emigration from Germany in 1933. With Tschichold, Kienzle had employed the New Typography movement's “expert, mouthpiece and figurehead”¹⁵ all in one and he was well aware of how prestigious this nomination was: Tschichold's publications, Kienzle wrote, were of “fundamental importance [...] for the new conception of typography”¹⁶ and his teaching at AGS Basel was highly “stimulating”.¹⁷

Student work from Tschichold's “typography sketching” courses show that he taught the principles of the New Typography – such as asymmetric compositions and the reduction of typographic means – to journeymen typesetters by setting them the tasks to redesign advertisements.¹⁸ In the mid-1930s, he redesigned the AGS Basel's printed matter according to the principles of the New Typography and went on designing posters and books for the school and its museum. (**fig. 47**) Tschichold also continued to be involved in the Gewerbemuseum's exhibition projects, for instance *Planvolles Werben. Vom Briefkopf bis zum*

11 Direktion des Gewerbemuseums Basel 1927: 4. Original: “wo es auf Bewegtheit, Farbe und Schlagkraft ankommt, also auf dem Gebiet des Werbewesens im weitesten Sinn”.

12 Kienzle 1929: 56.

13 STABS, Erziehung NN3, Hermann Kienzle, Brief an AGS-Kommissionspräsident Fritz Mangold betr. Fachklasse für Graphik, Basel, 24 March 1931: 1. Original: “neuere[n] Richtung”.

14 Gewerbemuseum Basel 1927: 13.

15 Kurz 2018: 52. Original: “Fachmann, Sprachrohr und Galionsfigur”.

16 STABS, Erziehung NN 2, Hermann Kienzle, Brief an das kantonale Arbeitsamt, Basel, 20 July 1934. Original: “von grundlegender Bedeutung [...] für die neue Auffassung der Typographie”.

17 *Ibid.* Original: “anregend”.

18 Brenneisen 1936: 178–180.

Werbefilm (Planned Advertising: From Letterhead to Commercial Film) in 1934. The exhibition advocated a major topic of the New Typography: the standardisation in graphic design, which was to be achieved through a planned and unified design of a client's complete print and advertising material.¹⁹

In the AGS's graphic design programme, Typography had been introduced as a course in 1933, which was a novelty in Swiss graphic design education then. Tschichold did not teach there right away – the first typography teacher for graphic design students was Karl Becker, AGS Basel long-time typesetting teacher. Becker had already integrated the design principles of the New Typography into his courses; however, he taught them on an equal footing with the traditional, “well-established form”.²⁰ Starting in 1938, Tschichold joined Becker and began teaching typography in the graphic design programme. However, at about the same time Tschichold also began to distance himself, at least in part, from the radical principles of the New Typography of the 1920s.²¹ He considered it unsuitable for book design now, and found it had “proven to be suitable only for advertising and other small printed matter”.²² Mainly advertising printed matter was designed in the graphic design programme, and it is therefore likely that Tschichold, despite his change of mind, did not completely discard the principles of the New Typography in his courses for graphic designers. Ultimately, however, it was not Tschichold who was the main driving force behind the implementation of avant-garde design principles in the AGS Basel graphic design programme, but the Swiss graphic designer Theo Ballmer.

Auguste Théophile Ballmer, born 1902 in Lausanne, was a trained lithographer who had been working as a graphic designer since the 1920s. From 1926 to 1929, he worked for the Basel chemical company Hoffmann-La Roche, where he experimented with the integration of photography and graphic design. The Gewerbemuseum Basel commissioned him to design several exhibition posters starting in the late 1920s, for example *100 Jahre Lichtbild* (100 Years of Photography) in 1927 and *Neues Bauen* in 1928. Shortly after the Bauhaus travelling exhibition in Basel in 1929, Ballmer moved to Dessau, Germany, to enrol at the Bauhaus with the goal to further

educate himself for a teaching position at the AGS Basel. In 1930, after his return to Switzerland, he started teaching in the graphic design programme, where he became the first teacher of the newly created Photography course and taught advertising graphics and lettering.²³

Ballmer's Advertising Graphics course was methodically structured, and the students worked on basic design exercises which gradually increased in complexity. They started by constructing letterforms using basic geometric shapes such as the square, rectangle and circle. Ballmer favoured similar constructed letter-

¹⁹ Gewerbemuseum Basel 1934.

²⁰ STABS, Erziehung NN 11, Karl Becker, Semesterbericht Typographie, AGS Basel, Summer Semester 1930: n.p. Original: “Die neue Typographie wurde wieder gepflegt, dabei aber die alten bewährten Formen nicht vernachlässigt”.

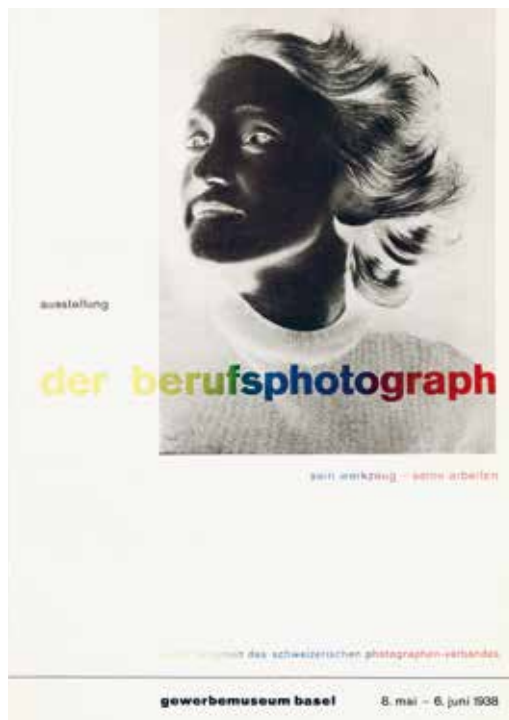
²¹ Bosshard 2012: 11, 27.

²² Tschichold 1946: 233. Original: “Die neue Typographie ist zwar noch nicht überholt, eignet sich aber erwiesenermaßen nur für Werbe- und andere kleine Drucksachen. Für das Buch, besonders für das literarische, ist sie im Allgemeinen völlig ungeeignet”.

²³ STABS, ED-REG 8b 11–3 (1), Allgemeine Gewerbeschule Basel, Stundenpläne Sommersemester 1931 und Sommersemester 1938.



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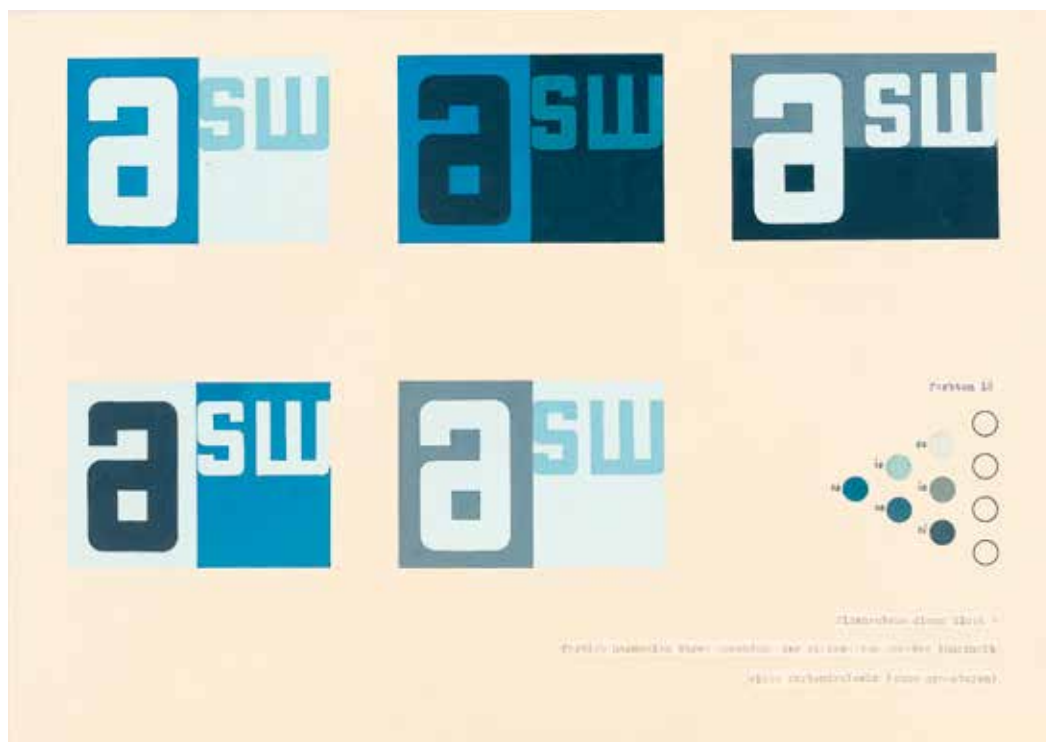
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fig. 46

Bauhaus Dessau, poster designed by Franz Ehrlich for the exhibition held at the Gewerbemuseum Basel, 21 April – 20 May 1929. Lithograph.

fig. 47

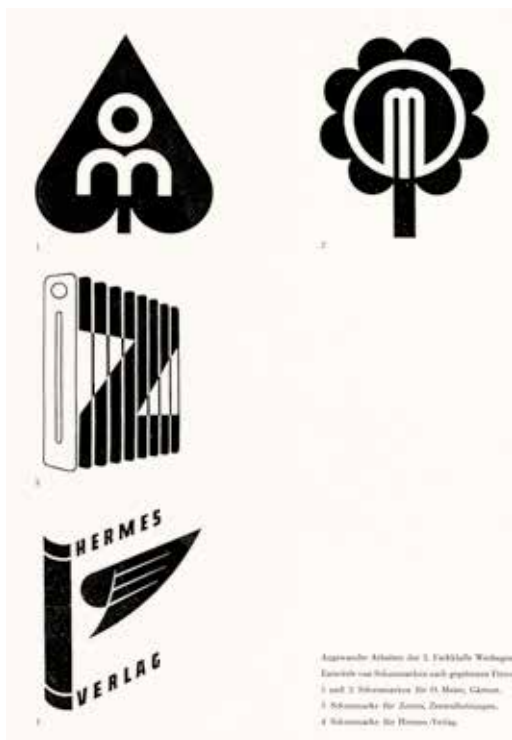
Der Berufsphotograph (The Professional Photographer), poster designed by Jan Tschichold for the exhibition held at the Gewerbemuseum Basel, 8 May – 6 June 1938. Photolithograph.



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fig. 48

Flächenbehandlung Blatt 9 (Surface treatment, sheet 9), teaching template by Theo Ballmer, for the Graphic Design course, using constructed type in combination with Wilhelm Ostwald's colour theory, Allgemeine Gewerbeschule Basel, ca. 1930.



49



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fig. 49

Exercise for logo designs for different clients, teachers Theo Ballmer and Ernst Keiser; top right logo, design by Beatrice Afflerbach-Hefti, other designs by anonymous. Allgemeine Gewerbeschule Basel, ca. 1930s.

fig. 50

Wintersport St Moritz, exercise for advertisement, teachers Theo Ballmer and Ernst Keiser, anonymous designers, Allgemeine Gewerbeschule Basel, ca. 1930s.

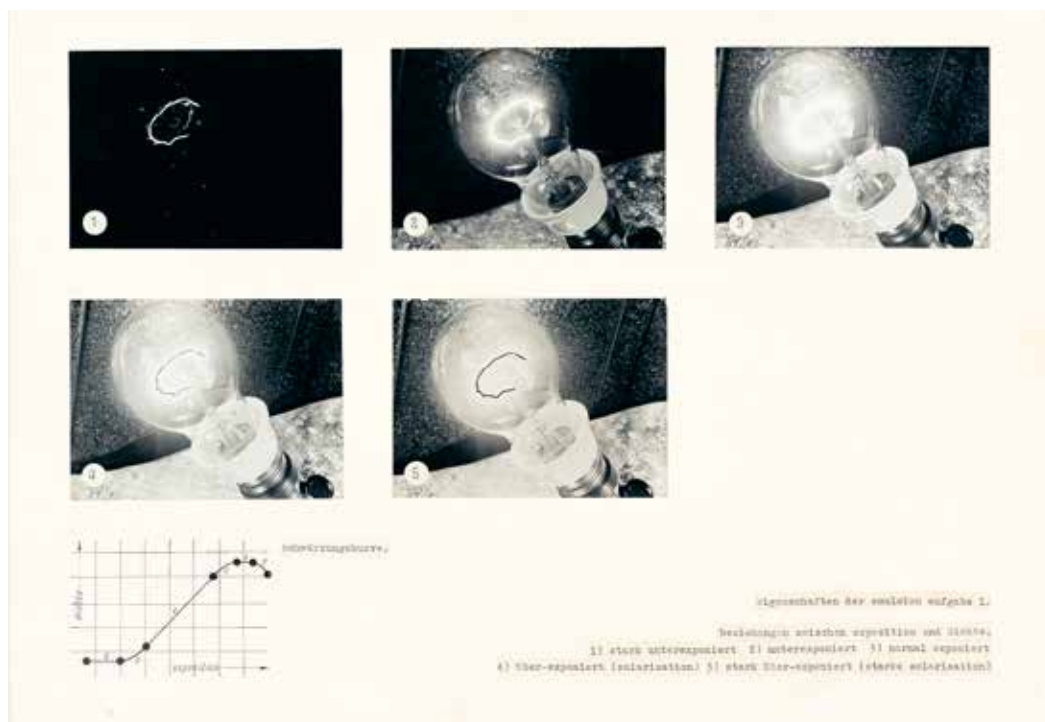


fig. 51 *Eigenschaften der Emulsion, Aufgabe 1* (Property of the emulsion, Exercise 1), teaching template for the Photography course, Teacher: Theo Ballmer, Allgemeine Gewerbeschule Basel, ca. 1930. Nachlass Theo Ballmer, Box X 5068 1, Swiss National Museum, Zurich.

forms in his own graphic design practice since the 1920s, for example in his famous poster for *Büro: Internationale Bürofachausstellung Basel* (Office: International Office Exhibition) in 1928. He shared this passion for constructed lettering with Joost Schmidt, who headed the advertising department when Ballmer studied at the Bauhaus. Through Schmidt's courses, constructed letters were omnipresent at the Bauhaus at that time.²⁴ In his classes at the AGS Basel, Ballmer taught the so-called *Flächenbehandlung* (surface treatment) exercises. Using a given rectangular area, the students explored the basic principles of design and composition and constructed the types in black and white, before finally adding colour in the next step. **(fig. 48)** Ballmer introduced Wilhelm Ostwald's colour system into the AGS Basel graphic design programme, where students were to work with "functionally determined harmonies" taken from Ostwald's system of colour triangles.²⁵ Ostwald had first published his colour theory in *Die Farbenfibel* (The Colour Primer) in 1917 as an attempt to provide a scientific system to produce colour harmonies.²⁶ His system was also used – and heavily debated – at the Bauhaus and in Joost Schmidt's graphic design teaching.²⁷

Ballmer's graphic design methodology was based on the conviction that design interventions – for example, changing an element's colour or varying a background pattern – had to be observed in isolation to understand their effects. Therefore, in his exercises, certain basic elements were always retained and only one component at a time was changed to observe the effect of this manipulation. Through this, according to Ballmer, the students learned to weigh the smallest interventions and gained the necessary experience to make design decisions.²⁸ Only after having completed the basic exercises on form, colour and composition would the students work on applied tasks, such as posters, advertisements and logos. **(figs. 49–50)** The goal here was to eventually combine lettering, graphic forms, colour and photography into a unity.

To this end, starting in 1930 Ballmer – who was a passionate, self-taught photographer – gave a Photography course for graphic design students at the AGS Basel, where they learned the basics of black-and-white photography and darkroom techniques. If we consider that at that time, according to Swiss graphic designer Walter Cyliax, the majority of Swiss graphic design professionals were still very sceptical of using photography instead of illustration on a regular basis, the permanent integration of a Photography course into a public trade school's graphic design programme was a far-sighted move.²⁹

When studying at the Bauhaus, Ballmer had attended Walter Peterhans's

Photography courses, where he learnt about technical subjects such as optics and sensitometry.³⁰ Peterhans was sceptical about experimental, artistic photography, and instead found creativity within photographic techniques. His attitude towards the object to be photographed was characterised by an aim for sobriety and rationality. To teach his Bauhaus students, Peterhans gave precise exercises concerning lighting, aperture of the lens, chemicals and photographic paper.³¹ Ballmer's photo teaching

²⁴ Brüning 1995: 193.

²⁵ SNM, *Nachlass Theo Ballmer*, LM 165 114.3, Unterrichtsmaterial, Flächenbehandlung Blatt 12, Aufgabenbeschreibung von Theo Ballmer. Original: "zweckmässig bestimmte Harmonien".

²⁶ Ostwald 1917.

²⁷ Ball and Ruben 2004: 4952–4953.

²⁸ BfGB, *Sondersammlung*, KSCV310/1–5+a, AGS Basel Kursbroschüren, Theo Ballmer und Ernst Keiser, Unterricht für Werbegraphik, ca. 1938.

²⁹ Cyliax 1929: 29–30.

³⁰ SNM, *Nachlass Theo Ballmer*, LM 165 315.3, Theo Ballmer, Notizbuch Optik / Notizbuch Sensitometrie, Bauhaus Dessau, ca. 1930.

³¹ As for Peterhans' photo teaching at the Bauhaus see Pastor 1986: 44, 46.

method at the AGS Basel shows clear references to Peterhans's method. Ballmer developed exercises for the graphic design students that demanded equally precise execution, and prepared numerous reference sheets to be used as teaching materials and visual aids, for example, on the topic of camera distance, angles, exposure etc. **(fig. 51)** Similarly to his gradually more complex exercises in the Advertising Graphics course, Ballmer created photographic exercises, so that his students had to adhere to a fixed constellation of camera adjustments, only changing one parameter at a time to make sure they recognised its impact.³² In terms of style and approach, Ballmer's reference sheets and teaching methods were based on the New Photography movement, consolidating in Switzerland during this time, with Ballmer being one of its protagonists.³³ According to the exhibition catalogue of *Die neue Fotografie in der Schweiz* (New Photography in Switzerland) at the Gewerbemuseum Basel in 1933, the New Photography's goal was to reclaim photography's originality in terms of technique and spirit.³⁴ Instead of formally imitating painting, the specific means of photography were to be celebrated and its technical aspects explored. This effectively resulted in high-detail reproductions of materials, structures and surfaces, in experiments with photograms, negative-exposure, over-exposure and in extreme photographic angles. Ballmer's AGS Basel Photography courses were featured in the exhibition as a paragon of New Photography in Switzerland.³⁵

As shown above, Ballmer taught most of the formal principles of New Typography and New Photography at the AGS Basel graphic design programme. This included the reduction of formal means, the use of geometrically constructed design elements on a structured surface, strong contrasts between printed and unprinted areas, "objective" photography instead of figural illustration and the preference for constructed typefaces instead of ornamental lettering.

However, he also implemented New Typography's theoretical concepts, such as the systematisation of colour and the standardisation of printed matter. As Tschichold put it in his essay "Die Gestaltung der Werbemittel" (Design of Advertisements), published in the 1934 Gewerbemuseum Basel's exhibition catalogue of *Planvolles Werben* (Planned Advertising) the use of standardised (DIN) paper formats and layouts, the consistency of typefaces and logos, and the formal unity of all kinds of printed matter for a company were supposed to replace common, "aimless" advertising.³⁶ Theo Ballmer's design for the poster, brochures, and so on for the *Internationale Bürofachausstellung Basel's* (Basel International Office Equipment Exhibition) was presented as a successful example of such standardisation in the same catalogue.³⁷ Ballmer was convinced that his students could not create decent graphic work before they understood the basic principles of standardisation and therefore gave

his advanced graphic design students exercises to redesign letterheads, envelopes, postcards and so forth with regard to consistency.³⁸

Another theoretical concept followed by many New Typographers and to which Ballmer agreed was the abolition of capital letters and the introduction of phonetic spelling. This demand originated from

32 SNM, *Nachlass Theo Ballmer*, Box X5068 2, Lehrplan für Fotografie von Theo Ballmer, Lehrer an der Allgemeinen Gewerbeschule Basel, ca. 1930.

33 Gasser 2007: 23, 29, 43.

34 Direktion des Gewerbemuseums Basel 1933: 3–4.

35 Gewerbemuseum Basel 1933: 26.

36 Tschichold 1934: 26.

37 Gewerbemuseum Basel 1934: 27.

38 STABS, Erziehung NN 11, Allgemeine Gewerbeschule Basel, T[h]eo Ballmer, Semesterberichte, Wintersemester 1931/1932.

the intensive reception of Walter Porstmann's type reform programme, published in the book *Sprache und Schrift* (Language and Writing) in 1920.³⁹ Ballmer used both lower-case and phonetic spelling with great consequence: in his graphic designs, such as those for the *Internationale Bürofachausstellung Basel* – Ballmer's German spelling of "büro" instead of the usual French "bureau" was completely unusual at that time⁴⁰ – in his teaching templates, (**figs. 48 and 50**) and in his written correspondence as well. In the latter, the lower-case and phonetic spelling was not limited to private correspondence, but extended to the semester reports he sent to his AGS Basel supervisor, where he simplified words that would look strange to the reader's eye such as "alfabet" instead of "Alphabet" and "staben" instead of "Buchstaben" (letters). The extent to which Ballmer was convinced of these ideas is also shown by his temporary removal of the silent letter "h" from his name; he called himself "Teo" for some time.⁴¹

Parallel to his courses at the AGS Basel, in the 1930s Ballmer designed several election posters for the Swiss Communist Party, in which he was also involved. His close interweaving of design activity and political commitment did not go unnoticed. In 1931, it led AGS Basel commission president Fritz Mangold to worry about Ballmer bringing politics into the classroom. Though he agreed with Hermann Kienzle that Ballmer was suitable to teach at the AGS Basel in terms of his design attitude, he wrote: "I fear that Mr B will be active in secret, in line with his political beliefs".⁴² Indeed, political allusions can be found in Ballmer's teaching materials of the 1930s. The template sheets he prepared for his photography courses – to demonstrate technical photography exercises – contain photographic motives such as a hammer and sickle and cut-outs from the *Basler Vorwärts*, the Communist Party's newspaper.⁴³ This may be due in part to the fact that Ballmer reused photographs from his freelance work. However, he could also have chosen less politically charged motifs. Apparently, he was not aware of (or indifferent to) the attention his political

graphic designs attracted and of the disadvantages this could create for his career at a public trade school, where political opinions were considered out of place.⁴⁴

This blending of a critique of design attitude and political conviction can also be seen in relation to Tschichold's teaching. In 1934, there was a joint complaint by a group of Basel-based graphic designers and the *Faktorenvereini-gung* (Association of Master Type-setters) concerning Tschichold's appointment as an AGS Basel typography teacher.⁴⁵ The complaint was based on two lines of argument: on the one hand, it was a criticism of Tschichold's design conception of the New Typography, perceived as too ideological. His works appeared

39 Porstmann 1920. On the reception of Porstmann's theory by the New Typographers, see Grütter 2019: 93–113.

40 Grütter 2019: 221.

41 Ballmer's spelling in the AGS Basel semester reports. STABS, *Erziehung NN 11*, Allgemeine Gewerbeschule Basel, T[h]eo Ballmer, Semesterberichte, Wintersemester 1931/32 und 1934/1935.

42 STABS, *Erziehung NN 3*, Fritz Mangold, Handwritten note on Hermann Kienzle's Letter, Basel, March 24, 1931. Original: "wiewohl ich fürchte, Herr B. werde etwa im Sinne seiner polit. Anschauung insgeheim tätig sein".

43 SNM, *Nachlass Theo Ballmer*, Box X5068 2, Theo Ballmer, Teaching templates, ca. 1930.

44 An example of political involvement being banned from AGS Basel is the "communist" student magazine *Der Stift*, which was published in 1934 and forbidden right away. Bischler 2021.

45 The written complaint itself was not preserved, however, Hermann Kienzle repeated the accusations in a letter to the cantonal employment office to then refute them. See STABS, *Erziehung NN 3*, Hermann Kienzle, Brief an das kantonale Arbeitsamt, Basel 20 July 1934.

“tendentious”⁴⁶ and dilettante, therefore he was considered unfit to work as a typography teacher at AGS Basel. On the other hand, the complaint had an anti-immigrant undertone: by working for companies such as the publishing house Benno Schwabe & Co and the chemical company Ciba’s advertising department, Tschichold would have taken commissions from Basel-based graphic designers. His “appointment from Germany”⁴⁷ would oust the previous typography teacher from his position at the AGS Basel. The complaints thus aimed at replacing the German Tschichold with a Swiss graphic designer or typographer. For Tschichold, this could have meant the loss of his residence permit and thus expulsion to National Socialist Germany. However, Tschichold found a vehement defender in his superior Hermann Kienzle, who refuted the accusations and vouched for his professional competence and irreplaceability with respect to the cantonal employment office.⁴⁸

These two examples show that the intense reception of the New Typography’s design principles and reformatory theory at AGS Basel during the 1930s, the resulting reorganisation of graphic design teaching and the replacements of teaching staff were not entirely well received. The critical voices, however, seemed to be expected, given the AGS Basel’s mission statement, published in 1929 (shortly before the *Bauhaus Dessau* exhibition), which already set the tone for the changes to come: “If a school, an institution, is supposed to stay alive, it has to be willing to abandon outdated ideas and try new things, in brief: it has to keep pace with the present day and its demands”.⁴⁹

46 *Ibid.* Original: “tendenziös aufgemacht”.

47 This statement, which was also an accusation of Kienzle as the one who employed Tschichold, was vehemently contradicted by him: Tschichold had not been appointed but had come to Switzerland on his own accord. *Ibid.*

48 *Ibid.*

49 Gewerbemuseum Basel 1929: 3. Original: “Jede Schule, jede Institution muss, wenn sie lebendig bleiben soll, den Willen haben, Überlebtes aufzugeben und Neues zu versuchen, kurz: mit dem Tag und seinen Forderungen schrittzuhalten”.

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SNM

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BfGB

Bibliothek für Gestaltung, Basel

StABS

Staatsarchiv Basel-Stadt, Basel
