

Addresses: 16 Biographic Profiles

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Ⓐ **Willi Baumeister**
(Friedrich Wilhelm Baumeister)

- * 22 January 1889 in Stuttgart, Germany
- † 31 August 1955 in Stuttgart, Germany
- Neue Mainzer Straße 47
Frankfurt am Main, Germany

← Photographer unknown, 1927

Biography

Friedrich Wilhelm Baumeister, known as Willi Baumeister, was a German painter, set designer, graphic designer and theorist. From 1905, he followed a decorative painter's apprenticeship. He simultaneously attended courses at the Königlich Württembergische Akademie der Bildenden Künste (Royal Württemberg Academy of Fine Arts), where he studied under Adolf Hölzel. His paintings first gravitated to French Impressionism before pivoting towards a geometric, Constructivist formal language. In 1919, Baumeister joined the Berlin artist's association Novembergruppe (November Group) and founded the Üecht Group with Oskar Schlemmer and Otto Meyer-Amden. He also began working as a commercial artist and stage designer, seeing no hierarchy between painting and graphic design, typography or set design.

His work as a set and costume designer was characterised by reduced forms. As for graphic design, from the mid-1920s he adopted the language of functional typography in his works for the industry and the arts.

During this period, his fine art work became political against the reactionary climate which was worsening. Baumeister developed a new style using reduced geometric forms, notably expressed in "wall pictures," which were raised reliefs and intended to integrate painting with architecture. Their favourable reception allowed him to develop a relationship with the Parisian avant-garde and feature his work in the Werkbund exhibition *Die Wohnung* (The Dwelling) in 1927. The success of this exhibition led him to receive a professorship at the Städelschule (Städel Art School) in Frankfurt. The same year, he co-founded the Ring "Neue Werbegestalt-

er" (Circle "New Advertising Designers") an association of advertising professionals whose founding members included Max Burchartz, Kurt Schwitters and Jan Tschichold.

In 1933, after years of increasingly vicious campaigns in the press, Baumeister was dismissed from his professorship. During the Nazi dictatorship, he was banned from working and exhibiting in Germany, but exhibitions and contacts abroad allowed him to keep showing his work, which he continued to develop in secret. Along with other artists who were banished from public life, he worked for the paint factory of Dr Kurt Herberts in Wuppertal from 1937 to 1944, which enabled him to undertake historical research on ancient painting techniques. From 1943 to 1944, he wrote the manuscript of *Das Unbekannte in der Kunst* (The Unknown in Art), which was published by Curt E. Schwab in 1947.

After World War II, Baumeister became an important personality in West Germany and quickly resumed his relations with the international art scenes. He was appointed professor and director of the painting class at the Staatliche Akademie der Bildenden Künste (State Academy of Fine Arts) in Stuttgart and was also once again able to create set designs alongside his paintings. His numerous exhibitions in Germany and internationally were positively received by critics. Baumeister never stopped working until his death in 1955 and he is now considered one of the most important artists of post-war Germany. [JB]

Sources

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Ⓑ **Herbert Bayer**
(Herbert Wilhelm Bayer)

- * 5 April 1900 in Haag am Hausruck, Austria
- † 30 September 1985 in Montecito, California, USA
- c/o Bauhaus
Friedrichsallee 12
Dessau, Germany

← Photo by Irene Bayer, 1927

Biography

Herbert Bayer was born on 5 April 1900 in Haag am Hausruck, Austria, former Austrian-Hungarian Empire. He was a graphic designer, painter, photographer and architect.

In 1919, he started his apprenticeship at the studio of Austrian architect Georg Schmidhammer in Linz. In 1920 he joined the Darmstädter Künstlerkolonie Mathildenhöhe (Mathildenhöhe Artists' Colony in Darmstadt), assisting the architect Josef Emanuel Margold. From 1921 to 1925 he enrolled at the Bauhaus, first in the *Vorkurs* (preliminary course) under Johannes Itten, then in the wall painting department under Wassily Kandinsky.

In 1923 Bayer met the photographer Irene Angela Hecht. They married in 1925, separated in 1928, had a daughter, Julia Alexandra, in 1929.

In 1925 Walter Gropius appointed him as a junior master, and until 1928 he led the newly established printing and advertising workshop at the Bauhaus Dessau. After leaving the Bauhaus he designed the Deutscher Werkbund exhibition in Paris with Walter Gropius and László Moholy-Nagy. Until 1938 he worked as a painter and graphic designer for advertisement in Berlin. He was the art director of the advertising agency Dorland, and the magazines *Vogue* and *Die neue Linie* (The New Line). Between 1934 and 1936, he accepted to create graphic designs for several Nazi propaganda campaigns through intermediary agents and not out of political sympathy.

In 1938 Bayer emigrated to the United States and settled in New York. He was active as a painter, graphic and exhibition designer for institutions and companies. He designed two exhibitions for the MoMA:

Bauhaus 1919–1928 (1938–1939) and the propaganda exhibition *Road to Victory* (1942). He divorced from his wife in 1944, remarried to Joella Synara Haweis and acquired American citizenship.

In 1946, Bayer moved to Aspen and started working as a design consultant at the Aspen Cultural Centre, taking care of architectural design for the institution. He then became the director of the design department at the Container Corporation of America in 1956. Between 1958 and 1961, he was a member of the arts council of the information office of the United States. He also began to work as a creative consultant for a number of important advertising agencies and department stores in 1965. The 1968 exhibition *50 Jahre Bauhaus* (50 Years of Bauhaus) in Stuttgart was also set up according to his design.

After befriending the oilman Robert O. Anderson, Bayer helped him establish the Atlantic Richfield Company and the eponym art collection (ARCO), which was sold at auctions after BP acquired the Company.

Bayer died in Montecito, California, on 30 September 1985. [DF]

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→ Patrick Rössler, Bauhaus Archiv, edited by, *Herbert Bayer. Die Berliner Jahre – Werbegrafik 1928–1938*, Vergangenheitsverlag, Berlin 2013.

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© **Max Burchartz**

- * 28 July 1887 in Elberfeld
Germany
- † 31 January 1961 in Essen
Germany
- Herner Straße 42
Bochum, Germany

← Photographer unknown, 1927

Biography

Max Burchartz was a painter, typographer and book designer. He underwent various apprenticeships, including in his father's upholstery fabric weaving mill, before studying at the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf (Art Academy Düsseldorf) under Walter Corde. His painting style was initially Impressionist, though he later adopted an Expressionist approach after serving in World War I. He met Theo van Doesburg in Weimar in the 1920s, became a member of De Stijl and attended the Dada-Constructivist Congress, which enabled him to meet El Lissitzky and Kurt Schwitters.

In 1924, finding it difficult to earn a living from painting, Burchartz moved from Weimar to the industrial Ruhr region, where he co-founded the Werbe-bau design studio in Bochum with Johannes Canis. Burchartz co-founded the Ring "Neue Werbegealter" (Circle "New Advertising Designers"), an association of advertising professionals whose other founding members included Willi Baumeister, Kurt Schwitters and Jan Tschichold. The approach favoured by the Circle included the standardisation in typefaces and paper sizes, the extensive use of photography and photomontage, and the tabular arrangement of statistical and numerical information. Werbe-bau followed these principles and was among the first to apply them to industrial commissions instead of educational or cultural contexts. The studio notably worked for the vertically integrated mining company Bochumer Verein, a member of the Deutscher Werkbund, for which they developed advertising booklets using asymmetry and advanced techniques of photomontage.

Burchartz also edited pamphlets that were published by Canis, including "Gestaltung der Reklame" (Design of the Advertisement), which Tschichold

included in “Elementare Typographie”. Tschichold and Burchartz remained in contact, and the work done by Werbe-bau for the Bochumer Verein was featured extensively in *Die neue Typographie*.

Between 1926–1933 and 1949–1961, Burchartz was a professor at the Folkwangschule (Folkwang Academy) in Essen. His teaching relied on the avant-garde concepts of art favoured by the De Stijl movement, Russian Constructivism and the Bauhaus, whereby the informative and aesthetic character of advertising can be achieved through a synthesis of rationality, functionality and precision. Burchartz died in Essen on 31 January 1961. His book *Schule des Schauens* (School of Vision) was published posthumously in 1962. [JB]

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Ⓓ **Dr Walter Dexel**

- * 7 February 1890 in Munich, Germany
- † 8 June 1973 in Braunschweig, Germany
- Fuchsturmweg 15
Jena, Germany

← Photographer unknown, 1915

Biography

Walter Dexel studied art history with Heinrich Wölfflin and Fritz Burger at the Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität (Ludwig Maximilian University) in Munich (1910–1914), while taking private drawing lessons from the painter Hermann Gröber. He obtained his doctorate in 1916 at the University of Jena under art historian and archaeologist Botho Gräf.

A self-taught painter, Walter Dexel produced his first works in the style of Cézanne during a study trip to Italy (1912–1913), and had his first solo exhibition with paintings influenced by Cubism at the Galerie Dietzel in Munich in 1914.

As exhibition director of the Kunstverein (Art Association) in Jena (1916–1928), he expanded the collection and invited avant-garde artists from nearby Bauhaus in Weimar as well as from all over Europe, belonging to different movements such as Dada, Expressionism, Constructivism. He urged to expand the scope of the Kunstverein beyond the fine arts to include the applied arts and architecture.

In the early 1920s Dexel's work as a painter moved from Cubism toward Constructivism. In 1921 he developed a close friendship with Dutch artist Theo van Doesburg. During the same year Dexel had several exhibitions at Herwarth Walden's Der Sturm Gallery in Berlin. From 1923 to 1927 he was a member of the Novembergruppe including Expressionist artists and architects.

The project for Dexel's family house (wife Grete Brauckmann and sons Thomas and Bernhard), commissioned to Ludwig Mies van der Rohe in 1924, never saw the light. In 1926 Dexel moved to Frankfurt am Main and

worked as a designer for books, advertisements, interiors, theatre sets and products for the German tableware manufacturer WMF (Württembergische Metallwarenfabrik).

In 1928 he joined the Ring “Neue Werbegestalter” (Circle “New Advertising Designers”) established by Kurt Schwitters after the first statements on the New Typography by Tschichold and Moholy-Nagy. Dixel taught graphic design at the Kunstgewerbe- und Handwerkerschule (School of Arts and Crafts) in Magdeburg (1928–1935), until he was dismissed by Nazi authorities, who considered his work part of “degenerate art.” He stopped painting that same year, until 1961.

During and after the war (1942–1955), he dedicated his studies to the form of household appliances, working and teaching in Braunschweig, where he died in 1973 at the age of 83. [DF]

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Ⓔ **Theo van Doesburg**
(Christian Emil Marie Küpper)

* 30 August 1883 in Utrecht,
Netherlands

† 7 March 1931 in Davos,
Switzerland

□ 64 Avenue Adolphe Schneider
Clamart, France

← Photographer unknown, 1927

Biography

Theo van Doesburg was a Dutch painter, art critic and theorist, poet and architect who is best-known as the leader of De Stijl. Born Christian Emil Marie Küpper, he took on his stepfather's name, Theodorus Doesburg, adding "van" when he began his career as a painter. He briefly trained in acting and singing before deciding to become a painter.

His early works fell under the influence of Post-Impressionism and Fauvism. It was not until he came into contact with Piet Mondrian's work in 1915 that Van Doesburg adopted geometric abstraction as his own artistic idiom. Two years later, in 1917, he co-founded the De Stijl group with Jacobus Johannes Pieter Oud, Jan Wils, Vilmos Huszár, Piet Mondrian, Bart van der Leek and Georges Vantongerloo, and concurrently launched the periodical of the same name. The group shared a stylistic coherence in the use of primary colours, rectangular forms and asymmetrical compositions. The magazine *De Stijl* was the expression of Van Doesburg's first typographic experiments. In 1919, he designed a geometrical alphabet. Under his Dadaist pseudonym of I.K. Bonset, he experimented with page layouts, type forms and sizes to explore the expressive potential of typography.

Van Doesburg moved to Weimar in 1921 but his expectations of being offered a teaching position at the Bauhaus were disappointed. Walter Gropius opposed what he considered Van Doesburg's inflexible attitude towards the use of geometry and repudiation of individualism. The rejection did not stop him and he began giving his own De Stijl course in the studio of a Bauhaus student. In 1925, he authored the sixth issue of the *Bauhausbücher* (Bauhaus Books) entitled *Grundbegriffe der neuen gestaltenden Kunst* (Principles of

Neo-Plastic Art). The influence of his visit had a great impact on the New Typography of László Moholy-Nagy and Herbert Bayer, who were respectively teaching and studying there at the time. Together with Kurt Schwitters and Kate Steinitz, Van Doesburg produced a series of children's fairy-tale books that featured unusual typography: *Hahne Peter* (Peter the Rooster, 1924), *Die Märchen vom Paradies* (Fairy Tales of Paradise, 1924) and *Die Scheuche* (The Scarecrow, 1925).

In 1923 Van Doesburg left Weimar and moved to Paris to be closer to Mondrian. The friendship and like-minded dialogue with Mondrian came to an end in 1924. The alleged cause of the estrangement between the two was Van Doesburg's use of diagonal lines, which were never accepted by Mondrian, to accentuate the dynamic aspects of the composition. After the split, Van Doesburg declared a new phase of De Stijl and launched the manifesto of Elementarism in 1926. He was also a member and driving force of many other groups, such as the groups Art Concret (Concrete Art) and Abstraction-Création that he contributed to launch in 1931. That same year he died of a heart attack in Davos, Switzerland, after several years of poor health. [CB]

Sources

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→ Paul Overy, *De Stijl*, Thames and Hudson, London 1991.



Ⓕ **Lajos Kassák**
(Christian Emil Marie Küpper)

* 21 March 1887 in Érsekújvár,
Austria-Hungary
(now Nové Zámky, Slovakia)
† 22 July 1967 in Budapest,
Hungary

□ Amalienstraße 26
Vienna, Austria

← Photo by József Pécsi, 1928

Biography

Lajos Kassák was a Hungarian poet, novelist, painter, essayist, editor, theoretician of the avant-garde. Kassák was born in 1887 in Érsekújvár, Austria-Hungary (present-day Nové Zámky, Slovakia). His father was an apothecary assistant and his mother a laundress. Kassák decided to quit his studies and started work as a locksmith assistant and then moved to Budapest in 1904 to work as a factory worker. He participated in political struggles related to trade unions from 1904 to 1907, when he left for Paris. He was expelled to Hungary in 1910. Kassák started participating in political-literary causes and also getting his poems and short stories published by newspaper houses, Modernist literary press and socialist publications. Self-taught, he became a writer and contributed to the socialist movement by publishing journals that played a key role in the radical intellectual and cultural scene of Budapest in the early 1900s.

In 1915, he launched his first journal, entitled *A Tett* (The Action), which was soon censored and banned for being “pacifist.” Kassák included texts on graphic design, typography and advertising in the magazines he curated. He was part of the intellectual movement that included the group of painters known as “The Eight” whose work he supported in his journals. He started the publication *MA* (Today, but also *Magyar Aktivizmus*, i.e. Hungarian Activism) in Budapest and after the fall of the Hungarian Soviet Republic, he emigrated to Vienna, where he continued publishing *MA*. He also published the anthology, *Buch neuer Künstler* (Book of New Artists), with the contribution of László Moholy-Nagy who helped him by gathering material in Berlin. *MA* and *Buch neuer Künstler* are among the sources of *Die neue Typographie*.

In 1926 Kassák returned to Hungary and engaged in more literary activities, strongly antagonised by the government. He subsequently became a member of the Parliament of the Social Democratic Party, in connection to which he edited a literary journal. His participation in these political spheres affected his reception and treatment as a writer after the journals were discontinued after the communist regime was installed after World War II. It was not until 1956 that Kassák's reputation as a writer became established.

Kassák engaged in multimodality using different media. He wrote novels, painted extensively, supported the budding socio-photographic form of artistry in Hungary and worked with music in a defining way with his partner Jolán Simon. Even more, Kassák delved into film production as well as dance. He is credited for integrating Russian artistic tenets into the rather exclusive Hungarian art setting. In recognition of all his politically enthused and artistically significant efforts, Kassák was awarded a state medal on his 80th birthday in 1967, and he died the same year in Budapest. [DF]

Sources

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Ⓔ **El Lissitzky**

(Lazar Markovich Lissitzky)

- * 23 November 1890 in Pochinok, Russia
- † 30 December 1941 in Moscow, Russia
- Ulitsa Stromynka 26, Quartier 50 Moscow, Russia

← Photo by El Lissitzky, 1924

Biography

Lazar Markovich Lissitzky, better known as El Lissitzky was a Russian artist, designer, photographer and architect. He lived and studied in the city of Vitebsk (now in Belarus), and later attended Grammar School in Smolensk. From the age of 13, he followed the drawing courses of artist Yehuda Pen, and at 15 began teaching drawing himself. In 1909 he applied to the Art Academy in Saint Petersburg, but was not admitted due to the antisemitic policies of the Tsarist regime. The same year he left for Germany to attend the Technische Hochschule (Technical University) in Darmstadt. He remained in Europe until the beginning of World War II, when he was forced to return home.

He attended the Riga Polytechnic Institute (which was operating from Moscow during the war) and worked in architecture's firms. After the fall of the Tsarist regime in 1917, Lissitzky contributed to the new vitality of Jewish culture by illustrating Yiddish children's books. In 1919, Marc Chagall invited him to teach at the newly established People's Art School in Vitebsk, where he conceived propaganda posters. Fellow teachers included Kazimir Malevich, whose ideas about non-figurative art clashed with those of Chagall, who eventually left the school. Despite being torn between traditional Jewish art and Malevich's positions, Lissitzky embraced Suprematism and expanded its expressions in the third dimension.

In 1920 Malevich and Lissitzky co-founded the movement MOLPOS-NOVIS (Young Followers of the New Art), later renamed UNOVIS (Exponents of the New Art). The group was dissolved by 1922, however, it played a key role in the dissemination of Suprematism in Europe and brought Lissitzky to

the fore of the avant-garde movements. He developed a personal Suprematist style he called *Proun*, where the language of Suprematism was explored by means of spatial elements, moving from lithographs and paintings to three-dimensional installations and experiments in architecture and exhibition design.

In 1921 Lissitzky took up a job as cultural representative of the USSR in Berlin. He co-founded with Ilya Ehrenburg the magazine *Veshch / Gegenstand / Objet* to convey Russian art to a European audience. Though short-lived, the magazine was a vehicle of Constructivist and Suprematist ideas to Western culture. During his German period, Lissitzky made himself a reputation as a graphic designer for books, including Mayakovsky's *Dlia golosa* (For the Voice) and *Die Kunstismen* (The Isms of Art) which he developed with Hans (Jean) Arp. In 1923 he had his solo exhibition at the Kestner Gesellschaft Gallery in Hanover. In 1927 he married Sophie Küppers, the widow of Paul Küppers, director of the Kestner Gesellschaft. In 1923 Lissitzky was diagnosed with tuberculosis, and subsequently spent a period at a sanatorium in Locarno, until he was denied the renewal of his visa and returned to Moscow. From 1925 to 1930 he taught at VKhUTEMAS (Higher State Artistic and Technical Workshops). In 1926 he briefly stayed in Germany and designed several art exhibitions in Dresden and Hanover. He joined ASNOVA (Association of New Architects) and was in charge of the design of the first and only issue of their journal.

At the beginning of 1928 he was again in Germany as chief artist for the Soviet Pavilion at *Pressa*, the International Press exhibition in Cologne, which left a mark on visual culture for its focus on moving images. In 1932 the communist regime tightened its control over the arts. Lissitzky's health was deteriorating, yet he was still in charge of many relevant exhibition designs, including the All-Union Agricultural Exhibition in 1937 or the Soviet pavilion at the New York's World Fair in 1939.

He died in Moscow due to complications of tuberculosis on 30 December 1941. [DF]

Sources

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Ⓜ **László Moholy-Nagy**
(László Weisz)

- * 20 July 1895 in Bácsborsód,
Austria-Hungary
(now Hungary)
- † 24 November 1946 in Chicago,
USA

- Burgkühnauer Allee 2
Dessau, Germany

← Photo by Hugo Erfurth, 1930

Biography

László Moholy-Nagy was a Hungarian artist, photographer, designer, educator and theorist. Born László Weisz in a small town in southern Hungary to a Jewish family, he was abandoned by his father at a young age. His maternal uncle, the lawyer Gusztáv Nagy, took care of the family and his education. László took the uncle's surname and added "Moholy," after the name of the town of Mohol where he spent his boyhood. He started his studies in law at the University of Budapest in 1913. Two years later he enlisted in the Austro-Hungarian army and was injured in 1917. Following the discharge from the military, he quit his law studies to attend evening art school classes. In 1921, he moved to Berlin, where he met his wife-to-be, the photographer and writer Lucia Schulz.

In 1923, Gropius invited Moholy-Nagy to join the Bauhaus in Weimar. He was appointed to replace Johannes Itten and co-teach with Josef Albers the preliminary course. He also took over from Paul Klee as head of the metal workshop. From 1925 to 1928, he resumed the same positions in Dessau. Moholy-Nagy also took charge of the typographic design of many of the school's publications, including, from 1925, the Bauhaus Books series. The arrival of Moholy-Nagy marked a radical turn towards a new unity of art and technology.

His contribution to interwar typography can be traced back to the essay "Die neue Typographie" published in the catalogue *Staatliches Bauhaus in Weimar 1919–1923*. In his work, he experimented with the possibilities of combining typography with photography, text and image, in what he called "typophoto." In his books *Malerei, Fotografie, Film* (Painting Photography

Film, 1925) and *The New Vision. From Material to Architecture* (1932), he coined the concept *Neues Sehen* (New Vision). The New Vision photography movement considered the camera lens as a second eye to look at the world in a new way and discover hitherto unseen aspects. This new way of seeing was based on the use of unusual viewpoints, radical cropping, extreme close-ups and experimental techniques, such as photomontages and photograms.

From 1928 until 1934, Moholy-Nagy was an established designer in Berlin, working on advertising design, typography and stage design. In 1935 he moved to London after a period in Amsterdam. In 1937, he was invited by Walter Paepcke, the chairman of the Container Corporation of America, to move to Chicago and lead the New Bauhaus. The school closed the following year. In 1939, he opened, with Paepcke's support, the School of Design in Chicago. The School was reorganised as the Institute of Design in 1944, and became part of the Illinois Institute of Technology since 1949.

Moholy-Nagy was diagnosed with leukaemia in November 1945 and died from internal haemorrhaging the following year. [CB]

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→ Eleanor M. Hight, *Picturing Modernism. Moholy-Nagy and Photography in Weimar Germany*, MIT Press, Cambridge MA 1995.



① **Johannes Molzahn**
(Johannes Ernst Ludwig Molzahn)

- * 21 May 1892 in Duisburg, Germany
- † 31 December 1965 in Munich, Germany
- Sternstraße 24
Magdeburg, Germany

← Photographer unknown, 1928

Biography

Johannes Molzahn was a painter, graphic artist and photographer. Shortly after his birth, his family moved to Weimar, where his father, who was passionate about Art Nouveau, worked as a master bookbinder. He attended the Großherzogliche Zeichenschule (Grand Ducal School of Drawing) and completed an apprenticeship as a photographer. In 1909–1910, he lived in Switzerland, where he first worked as a photographer. He joined the circles of artists around Otto Meyer-Amden, who also taught Willi Baumeister, Johannes Itten and Oskar Schlemmer. During the years 1912–1913, he notably visited the Kunsthaus Zurich, which was a centre of dissemination of Italian Futurism.

In 1914, he moved back to Weimar, where he completed his military service. During this period, he began cultivating contacts with the circle of the gallery and magazine *Der Sturm* (The Storm) in Berlin; by the end of World War I, he had become a member of the inner circle. His paintings during this period were Cubist, with some elements from Art Nouveau. In 1919, he published “Das Manifest des absoluten Expressionismus” (The Manifesto of Absolute Expressionism) in the magazine *Der Sturm*. This was followed by a period influenced by Italian Futurism, but also an increased interest in the applied arts, notably typography. During these years, Molzahn, who knew Walter Gropius, seemingly persuaded him to appoint several painters from the Sturm Gallery to the Bauhaus, though he was never part of the faculty himself. He cultivated contacts with the institution, especially with Gropius, Robert Michel, Georg Muche and Oskar Schlemmer.

From 1922 to 1929, Molzahn taught advertising graphics, typesetting, printing, lithography, photography and collage at the Kunstgewerbe- und Handwerkerschule (School of Arts and Crafts) in Magdeburg. He became one of Germany's leading typographers, developing work mostly for Bruno Taut, who headed the art school in Magdeburg. He also designed a poster for the 1930 German Olympics, which received an honourable mention although the designer had become politically suspect by that point.

During this period, Molzahn developed a "metaphysical Constructivism" combining technical elements with metaphysical symbols and wrote theoretical and pedagogical essays that remain unpublished. In 1928, Oskar Moll appointed him professor of painting and design at the Staatliche Akademie für Kunst und Kunstgewerbe (State Academy for Arts and Crafts) in Breslau, which became a hotspot for the German avant-garde. During this period, Molzahn grew increasingly interested in mysticism and astrology. He moved to Berlin when the Academy closed following the Nazi's emergency decrees. His work was classified as "degenerate" in 1937 and he emigrated to the US a year later. He worked as a professor in the Art Department of the University of Washington in Seattle, then from 1943 at the New Bauhaus, the School of Design in Chicago, and after the war at the New York School of Social Research.

During his stay in the US, Molzahn developed a new style in which he explored transcendental notions of space before moving to iconic religious painting. He returned to Germany in 1959 and died in Munich in 1965. [JB]

Sources

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⓵ **Joost Schmidt**
(August Wilhelm Schmidt)

- * 21 May 1892 in Duisburg, Germany
- † 31 December 1965 in Munich, Germany

□ Sternstraße 24
Magdeburg, Germany

← Photographer unknown, 1926/1932

Biography

August Wilhelm “Joost” Schmidt was a German typographer and graphic designer. One of three children, he studied at the Großherzoglich-Sächsische Hochschule für bildende Kunst (Grand-Ducal Saxon Academy of Fine Art) in Weimar from 1910 to 1914, when he received his diploma in Painting under the supervision of painter Max Thedy.

He served in the military during World War I and was briefly a prisoner of war in France until he returned to Germany in 1918. He then attended the Bauhaus from 1919 to 1925, training in the stone- and wood-carving workshop. His diploma work included the design and completion of carvings for the Sommerfeld House in Berlin and the design of a poster for the 1923 Bauhaus exhibition in Weimar, for which he also developed a pantomime performed at the Municipal Theatre in Jena. In 1925, he married fellow Bauhaus student Helene Nonné.

At the Bauhaus, Schmidt taught calligraphy for the preliminary course from 1925 to 1932, directed the sculpture workshop (1928–1930), the advertising, typography and printing workshop, as well as the affiliated photography department (1928–1932). He was also in charge of the layout of the covers of the design journal *Die Form*, which is listed by Jan Tschichold among the sources of *Die neue Typographie*.

After the Nazis banned him from teaching in public schools, he briefly taught at the Kunst und Werk – Private Schule für Gestaltung (Art and Work – Private School of Design) run by architect Hugo Häring. He opened a studio in Berlin in 1934, working as an illustrator and typographer for various publishers, as well as collaborating with Walter Gropius on the propaganda

exhibition *Deutsches Volk, Deutsche Arbeit* (German People, German Work).

After World War II, he became a professor at the Hochschule für bildende Künste (Academy of Fine Arts) in Berlin and remained active as an exhibition designer together with other Bauhaus alumni.

He died in Nürnberg in 1948 while working on a Bauhaus exhibition and on the publication of a Bauhaus Book, survived by his wife Helene Nonné Schmidt. In 1964, his posthumous works were shown at the *Documenta III* in Kassel. [DF]

Sources

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- Ⓚ **Kurt Schwitters**
 (Kurt Hermann Eduard
 Karl Julius Schwitters)
- * 20 June 1887 in Hanover,
 Germany
- † 8 January 1948 in Kendal,
 United Kingdom
- Waldhausenstraße 5
 Hanover, Germany
- ← Photo by Genja Jonas, 1927

Biography

Founder and only member of the art style *Merz*, Kurt Schwitters was a prolific and multifaceted artist whose output encompassed painting, sculpture, installation, collage, poetry, typography, publishing and performance. Born in 1887 into a well-to-do family in Hanover, he enrolled in 1908 at the local Kunstgewerbeschule (School of Arts and Crafts), but moved soon after to Dresden where he studied at the Königlich Sächsische Akademie der Künste (Royal Saxon Academy of Arts) until 1915.

In 1919, Schwitters coined the term “Merz” to describe his abstract collages and assemblages made out of found materials and seemingly worthless objects. That same year, he published the bestseller book *Anna Blume. Dichtungen* (Anna Blume. Poems) that included the nonsensical love poem “An Anna Blume” (To Anna Blume). From 1923, he worked at the Merzbau (Merz building): an ever-evolving installation, which eventually occupied entire rooms of his apartment, combining detritus of everyday life with larger-scale architectural elements.

Schwitters’ interest in typography developed over the 1920s. Between 1923 and 1932, he published the periodical *Merz*. Issues were devoted to a central theme and were at times co-authored with members of the international avant-garde: *Merz* 8/9 “Nasci” (Nature, 1924) was edited and typeset by El Lissitzky, whereas Jan Tschichold took care of the typography of *Merz* 24 (1932). The latter was the last edition of the journal and featured the complete transcription of the sound poem “Ursonate” (Original Sonata or Primeval Sonata). In 1924, he founded the graphic design agency Merz-Werbezentrale and worked as the official typographer of the

Hanover Town Council between 1928 and 1934. In 1927, he co-founded the international association of graphic designers Ring “Neue Werbegestalter” (Circle “New Advertising Designers”) with fellow members Willi Baumeister, Max Burchartz, Walter Dexel, César Domela, Jan Tschichold and Friedrich Vordemberge-Gildewart.

Schwitters’ work was included in the *Entartete Kunst* (Degenerate Art) touring exhibition in 1937. The same year he decided to leave Germany for Norway, where he stayed until 1940, when the Nazis invaded the country. Upon his arrival in the UK, he was interned on the Isle of Man with a large number of intellectuals, artists and writers who, like him, had been declared “enemy aliens.” Once released, he moved first to London (from 1941 to 1945) and then to the Lake District (1945–1948). Here, he spent the last years of his life recreating the *Merzbau* in a barn. [CB]

Sources

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→ Gwendolen Webster, *Kurt Merz Schwitters. A Biographical Study*, University of Wales Press, Cardiff 1997.



Ⓐ **Franz Wilhelm Seiwert**

- * 9 March 1894 in Cologne
Germany
- † 3 July 1933 in Cologne,
Germany
- Eigelstein 147
Cologne, Germany

← Photo by August Sander, 1924

Biography

Franz Wilhelm Seiwert was a German painter and sculptor, member of the Kölner Progressiven (Cologne Progressives) avant-garde group and exponent of the Figurative Constructivism movement.

From 1910 to 1914 he studied at the at the Kölner Kunstgewerbeschule (Cologne School of Arts and Crafts). After his studies he worked for an architect until the outbreak of World War I. Around 1916 he produced his first Expressionist woodcuts. In 1920 he discovered the Dada movement and was invited to the large Dada exhibition in Cologne that same year, but he withdrew from the group as he considered the Dada aesthetic too radical and its social commitment too bland and generic. Since then, he devoted his work to the communist cause documenting the working conditions in the Ruhr area with an increasingly abstract language. His political commitment is exemplified in his graphic and theoretical contribution to the left-wing magazine *Die Aktion* (The Action) and the communist newspaper *Sozialistische Republik* (Socialist Republic).

In 1920, Seiwert together with Heinrich Hoerle and Gerd Arntz founded the group called “Kölner Progressive” or “Gruppe progressiver Künstler” (Cologne Progressives or Group of Progressive Artists) including several other artists. The group edited the magazine *A bis Z* (A to Z), issued until February 1933. Mixing Modernist techniques and figurative vocabulary, he conceived paintings and prints in which he used the clear lines and geometrical forms to create social types that merged into collective bodies.

After the Nazis seized power, Seiwert fled to the Siebengebirge hills, but for health reasons had to return to Cologne where he died at the age of 39. In 1937, twelve of his works were confiscated from the Wallraf-Richartz-Museum in Cologne, the Kaiser Wilhelm-Museum in Krefeld and the Ruhmeshalle in Wuppertal-Barmen as part of the Nazi campaign on “degenerate art.” [CB]

Sources

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→ Lynette Roth, edited by, *Painting as a Weapon. Progressive Cologne 1920–33. Seiwert, Hoerle, Arntz*, Walther König, Cologne 2008.



Ⓜ **Karel Teige**

* 13 December 1900 in Prague,
Austria-Hungary
(now Czech Republic)

† 1 October 1951 in Prague,
Czech Republic

□ Černa 12
Prague, Czech Republic

← Photographer unknown, 1920s

Biography

Karel Teige was a Czech architect, designer, critic and theorist. He was a key link between peripheral scenes of interwar Czechoslovakia and international avant-garde figures such as Le Corbusier, Man Ray, Paul Klee, Vladimir Mayakovsky and Walter Gropius. He was the editor of several avant-garde journals, including *Disk* (The Disc), *Zeme Sovetu* (Land of the Soviets), *Stavba* (Building), and *RED* (Devětsil Review).

Teige began studying philosophy in 1919, but soon devoted all his energy to avant-garde art. In 1920 he founded and became the leading figure of Devětsil, an avant-garde group of Czech artists and poets. In the 1920s he contributed to the Berlin left-wing magazine *Die Aktion* (The Action) and lectured at the Bauhaus. In 1924, he coined the concept of “Poetism” to describe his art practice. Poetism sustained the autonomy of art and the unity of art and life, in opposition to both Constructivism and its utilitarian approach, and the idea of proletarian art as an instrument of class struggle. It argued for the triumph of the optical form over the literary in poetry, and erased any difference between high and low art. In 1934 he co-founded the Surrealist Group of Czechoslovakia alongside Toyen (Marie Čermínová), Jindřich Štyrský, Bohuslav Brouk and Vitezslav Nezval.

Teige's designs – involving an expressive use of type, montage, collage, and clips borrowed from silent films – are an original synthesis of the influence of Constructivist, Surrealist and Bauhaus graphics. Between 1922 and 1938, he designed about a hundred books and magazines, steering book design in new directions. Teige explained his graphic design principles in two articles: “Moderní Typo” (“Modern Typography,” in *Typografia*, 34, 7–9, 1927) and

“Konstruktivistická typografie na cestě k nové formě knihy” (“Constructivist Typography, on the Way to New Book Design,” in *Typografia*, 39, 3–4, 1932). Aspects of his vision were in line with those of other exponents of the New Typography, such as the use of sans-serif typefaces, geometrical layouts and typophotos. He was a member of the Ring “Neue Werbegestalter” (Circle “New Advertising Designers”), an international group of typographers and graphic designers formed in 1927 by Kurt Schwitters and others.

Shortly after the communist takeover in Czechoslovakia in February 1948, Teige was declared enemy of the people. In 1951, he died of a heart attack a few days before a police search of his house, during which many of his manuscripts disappeared. [CB]

Sources

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→ Koosje Sierman, “The Game of Art,” in *Eye Magazine*, 12 (3), 1994.



Ⓝ **Jan Tschichold**
(Johannes Tzschichhold)

- * 2 April 1902 in Leipzig,
Germany
- † 11 August 1974 in Locarno,
Switzerland
- Pranckhstraße 2
Munich, Germany

← Photo by Eduard Wasow, ca. 1930

Biography

Jan Tschichold was born Johannes Tzschichhold in Leipzig on 2 April 1902, the son of a provincial sign painter. He spent his childhood in Grimma, a small town between Leipzig, Chemnitz and Dresden. In 1919 he started his training in calligraphy at the Königlichen Akademie für graphische Künste und Buchgewerbe (Royal Academy of Graphic Arts and Book Printing) in the class of Hermann Delitsch. His outstanding achievements made him the pupil of Walter Tiemann, the director of Gebrüder Klingspor type foundry. He then attended the Kunstgewerbeschule (School of Arts and Crafts) in Dresden from 1920 to 1921.

In 1923 he received his first commission in the framework of the Leipzig Trade Fair and set up his own business as typographic consultant for other designers, such as the commercial artist Erich Gruner. Thus, Tschichold capitalised on an artisan background that set him apart from almost all other typographers of the time, who were trained in the fine arts or architecture. Also in 1923, a visit to the Bauhaus exhibition in Weimar changed radically Tschichold's approach from traditional typography to the positions of designers such as Moholy-Nagy, El Lissitzky or Schwitters. In Leipzig he met Edith Kramer, who became his wife. Around 1924–1925 Johannes Tzschichhold changed his first and family name to Iwan Tschichold, Ivan Tschichold and then from 1926 to Jan Tschichold, a fashionable attitude of those years.

In 1925 he summarised the principles of these new approaches in a special issue of *Typographische Mitteilungen* (Typographic Communications) devoted to "elementary typography," which sparked passionate debate. At the end of the year, Tschichold moved to Berlin. In 1926 Tschichold moved

to Munich to take up a teaching position at the Graphische Berufsschule (Professional Graphic Design School) upon the invitation of Paul Renner. His name was officially changed into Jan Tschichold.

His work was included in the exhibition *Neue Typographie* at the Gewerbemuseum Basel in 1927, and in 1928 he published *Die neue Typographie* (The New Typography), at the same time a manifesto and a handbook of a new approach to graphic design. With the rise to power of the Nazi party, Paul Renner was denounced as a cultural Bolshevik and lost his job as director of the school in Munich. Subsequently, he was no longer able to protect Tschichold, who was taken into custody with his wife under suspicion of pro-communist ideas.

Upon being liberated, Tschichold and his family migrated to Switzerland and settled in Riehen, near Basel. He started teaching at the Allgemeine Gewerbeschule (General Vocational School) in Basel and worked for the publishing houses Benno Schwabe and Birkhäuser. In 1943, he established “Die schönsten Schweizer Bücher” (The Most Beautiful Swiss Books) competition.

From 1946 to 1949, Tschichold moved to London where he redesigned Penguin Books’ corporate design. In 1950 he moved back to Basel, and from 1955 he worked for the pharmaceutical company Hoffmann-La Roche.

Jan Tschichold died on 11 August 1974 in Locarno. [DF]

Sources

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⊙ **Tristan Tzara**
(Samuel Rosenstock)

- * 16 April 1896 in Moinești,
Romania
- † 25 December 1963 in Paris,
France
- 15 Rue Delambre
Paris, France

← Photo by André Kertész, 1926

Biography

Tristan Tzara was a poet and writer. Born Samuel Rosenstock in a wealthy Jewish family in Romania, he was schooled at a French private school in Bucharest. There, he met Ion Vinea and Marcel Janco with whom he founded *Simbolul* (Symbol), a literary review in which he published poetry under the pseudonym S. Samyro. In 1915, his family sent him to Zurich, where he studied philosophy at university. The same year, he published a poem signed as Tristan Tzara, the pseudonym he would use thereafter. In Zurich, Tzara reunited with Marcel Janco and his brother Jules, with whom he attended the opening night of Cabaret Voltaire. In 1916, he joined other artists such as Hans (Jean) Arp, Hugo Ball, Richard Huelsenbeck and Hans Richter in founding the Dada movement. Tzara was one of the most active founders of the movement, notably organising readings and exhibitions, staging performances and organising publications.

In 1918, Tzara presented his Dada manifesto at the restaurant Zunftthaus zur Meisen and published the document in the third issue of the artistic review *Dada*. Following this, André Breton and Tristan Tzara began a connection which led the latter to move to Paris in 1920 and join Breton's Littérature group. While Breton progressed towards Surrealism, Tzara remained a firm Dadaist, notably keeping his position as the editor of *Dada*.

Tzara was a communist sympathiser and member of the French Resistance during the German occupation of Paris. Between 1939 and 1950, he published anthologies of his poetry with illustrations by Henri Matisse, André Masson and Pablo Picasso. He remained the spokesperson for the Dada movement until his death in Paris in 1963. [JB]

Sources

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→ Laurent Le Bon, edited by, *Dada*, Éditions du Centre Pompidou, Paris 2005.

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P **Piet Zwart**

- * 28 May 1885 in Zaandijk, Netherlands
- † 24 September 1977 in Wassenaar, Netherlands
- Rijksstraatweg 290
Wassenaar, Netherlands

← Photo by Piet Zwart, 1929

Biography

Piet Zwart was an architect, typographer and industrial designer known for his graphic design work. He attended the Rijksschool voor Kunstnijverheid Amsterdam (National School of Applied Arts) from 1902 to 1907, where he studied a range of art subjects, including painting and architecture. He initially produced textiles, furniture and interior designs in line with the Expressionist style developed by the Amsterdam School, before finding inspiration in the works of Viennese artists and designers, such as Koloman Moser and Josef Hoffmann.

After working as a drawing and art history teacher, in 1913 he moved to Voorburg to study architecture at the Technische Hoogeschool (University of Technology) in nearby Delft. Shortly after World War I, he befriended the painter Vilmos Huszár and the architect Jan Wils, who had been among the founders of De Stijl and whose ideas influenced Zwart, though he never joined the movement. From 1919, he worked as a draughtsman for Wils for two years, while also developing typographic work with an increasingly radical Modernist approach.

From 1921, he worked for the influential Dutch architect Hendrik Petrus Berlage, a founding figure of the Amsterdam School, with assignments ranging from architecture to products and furniture, stained glass and signage. From 1923, Zwart began designing press advertisements for the Nederlandse Kabelfabriek (Dutch Cable Factory), thanks to Berlage providing contact with his son-in-law, who sat on the board of directors of the same company. This working relationship lasted for ten years, during which Zwart produced 275 advertisements, which represent his most important contribution to

Dutch typography. He also became interested in developments in graphic and type design in Germany. Like other avant-garde designers, he believed in the machine and admired the works of El Lissitzky and László Moholy-Nagy. In 1928, he was invited to join the Ring “Neue Werbegestalter” (Circle “New Advertising Designers”) by Kurt Schwitters. Jan Tschichold, one of its many members, a year later invited Zwart to contribute to the international exhibition *Film und Foto* (FiFo) in Stuttgart.

In 1930, Zwart began working for the industrialist Cornelis Bruynzeel, for whom he created annual calendars and other commercial items before designing a factory in Zaandam. Soon thereafter, he was appointed chief designer there. He notably designed a highly progressive modular kitchen in 1937.

During World War II, Zwart was arrested by the occupying German forces and held prisoner in an internment camp until 1945. After the war, he became increasingly involved with teaching, industrial and interior design, and much less with graphic design. He died in 1977, aged 92. [JB]

Sources

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