

New Release November 2021

## Concrete Poetry, Typography and Eugen Gomringer

Simon Mager (ed.)  
**Words Form Language.**  
On Concrete Poetry, Typography, and the  
Work of Eugen Gomringer

Book design: Omnigroup Lausanne  
220 pages, ca. 120 images, 16 × 24 cm  
Softcover

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With a foreword by Roland Früh.

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- Eugen Gomringer as a copy-writer in the dynamic field of concrete poetry and art

- Texts are not just a communication channel, they also have a visual expression

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Bolivian-born Swiss poet, writer and publisher Eugen Gomringer (\*1925) is often described as the father of concrete poetry. He was an active figure in Switzerland's post-war design and art scene and was a voice of poetry at the intersection of literature, art and design.

From 1953 onwards, together with Dieter Roth and Marcel Wyss, Gomringer co-published the artist's magazine *spirale*, that formed the starting point for his form of poetry.

From an early stage, Gomringer wanted to blur the boundaries of poetry and the language of advertising. Throughout his entire career he remained an advocate of interdisciplinarity, collaborating actively with artists and graphic designers such as Max Bill, Karl Gerstner, Anton Stankowski and above all the Zurich-based design studio E + U Hiestand.

This publication was created following extensive research in archives in Switzerland and Germany. The book combines original images and selected works from Gomringer's long-standing collaborations as art director and copy-writer for various companies. It also contains the theoretical essay "vom vers zur konstellation" (from verse to constellation), Gomringer's original manifesto published in 1954.

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“Visual Archives” (Visuelle Archive, Archives visuelles)  
– a series in co-operation with ECAL / University of Art  
and Design Lausanne

## About the editor

**Simon Mager** is a German graphic designer, based in Lausanne, Switzerland. He graduated with a Master in Art Direction from ECAL/University of Art and Design Lausanne, where he continued to work as a teaching assistant and visiting lecturer. Since 2016 he runs the collaborative design practice Omnigroup together with Leonardo Azzolini. The studio works in the field of type and graphic design for international clients and is active in research and education. In 2017 the studio won the Swiss Design Award. In 2019 Simon Mager was awarded the Josef Müller-Brockmann Prize.

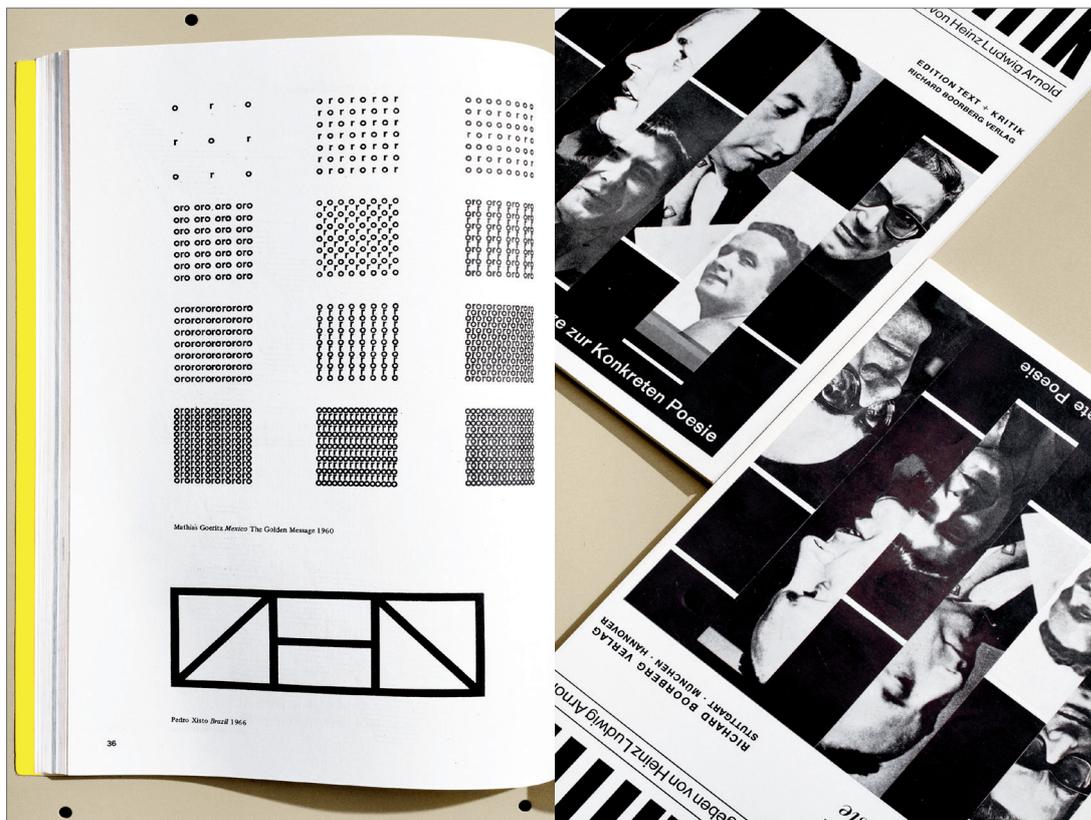
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## D A Brief Encounter with the History of Experimental Typography

The first examples that, in the broadest sense, play with language as image probably date back to the hieroglyphs or Babylonian pattern poems and the Greek Phaistos Disc of the 2nd Millennium BC, or the *Carmina Figurata* of the Greek Bucolic Poets.<sup>20</sup>

But let us fast forward, instead, to Stéphane Mallarmé's poem, *Un coup de dés jamais n'abolira le hasard* (A Throw of the Dice Will Never Abolish Chance) published in 1897.<sup>21</sup> This poem uses words to create a pictorial form, in addition to a traditional narrative. Even today it is acknowledged as the first exploration of a combination of a free verse with an awareness of the visual aspects of a text and its typographic arrangement on the page. It can, therefore, be seen as a precursor of 20th century developments in typography and Concrete poetry.<sup>22</sup> Mallarmé's use of white space as a constitutive element of the text within and across the 20 pages of the poem and the playful relationship between the narrative and the succeeding pages make it a particularly important reference point for experimental poetry and typography. Mallarmé's visual and linguistic explorations were further pursued by French poet Guillaume Apollinaire, in *Calligrammes*, where words were arranged to form objects or word images.<sup>23</sup>

At almost the same time as Guillaume Apollinaire's *Calligrammes* appeared, Italian Futurist Filippo Tommaso Marinetti published *Zang Tumb Tumb* (1912–1914), an artist's book. Using what he referred to as "liberated language," Marinetti reinterpreted a combat situation he had witnessed some years earlier through his use of the phonetic, visual, and verbal qualities of language in a playful typographic layout. Some years earlier, in 1905, German poet Christian Morgenstern had published *Galgenlieder* (Gallows Songs). In this collection of poems, language itself is Morgenstern's primary interest, and this becomes most apparent in *Fisches Nachtgesang* (Fish Night Song). By using only breves and macron signs, he manages to dissolve syntactical structure and conceptually anticipate both sound and visual poetry.<sup>24</sup>



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