SECTION NO. 1

A GLOSSARY

KNOW THE STYLES YOU'RE PLAYING WITH

Vintage clothing stores are more than places to buy new/old fashions. They are reliquaries of history. Vintage graphic design, likewise, is more than a swap shop where one style is traded for another. Designers can learn a great deal about art, culture, and technology—context—from the historical styles they experiment or play with. But before trying on or taking a style for a spin, get to know the historical options that are available. Playing with graphic style is more satisfying when there is fluency at the core.


BORDEAUX
ALIMENTATION

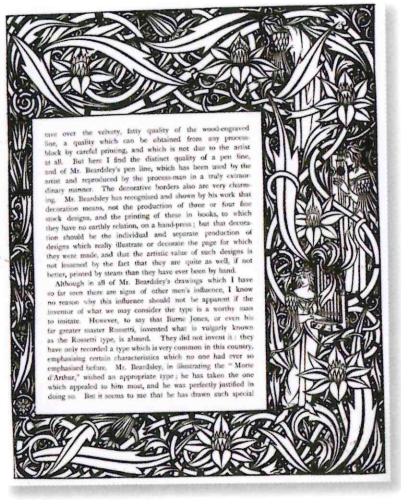

RIKSTELEFON.


ЛЕНИН
СТАЛИН


RZ
KURT SCHWITTERS
RAOUL HAUSMANN
TANZE
TYPSI-STEP
WANG-WANG-BLUES
RAYNBOWS
OGRA2M
VORTRAG
DIE GESETZE DER LAUTE
ALS SEELENMARGARINE
DADAISTISCHE SEEFAHRT
MANIFEST vom fliegenden MAIKÄFER
MANIFEST vom BRUMKREISEL
DIE GESCHICHTE DES JOSEF GNOI
Phonetische Dichtungen
Neu!!
KOLUMBUS
O.R.P.


STAATLICHES BAUHAUS
AUSSTELLUNG
JULI
SEPT
WEIMAR
1923


KLMNO
STUVW
X$.,'-:;

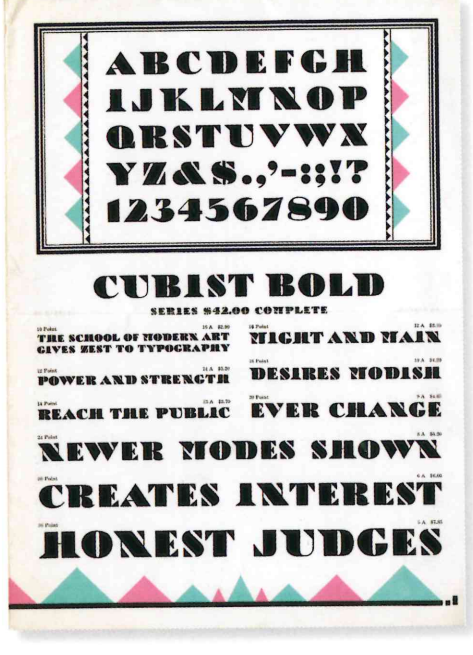


ARTS AND CRAFTS

Founded in England by **William Morris** (1834–1896), arts and crafts was an alternative design movement more or less from 1860 to 1910, with offshoots in the United States (Roycrofters, Stickley, etc.) and elsewhere. It was led by the artist, designer, writer, and social critic William Morris and inspired by the writings of critics **John Ruskin** (1819–1900) and **Augustus Pugin** (1812–1852). With its emphasis on handwork and its revival of Gothic styling, arts and crafts (also known as the aesthetic movement) was philosophically based on a critique against industrialization and the impoverished state of decorative arts in Great Britain. The output of arts and crafts communities was based on traditional craftsmanship often influenced by medieval, romantic, or folk styles of decoration. The movement advocated economic and social reform. Other workshops developed around the world, but none with as much far-reaching and long-respected influence. It is known for its naturalist graphic motifs, a precursor of art nouveau.

ART DECO

Launched in Paris at the 1925 Exposition internationale des arts décoratifs et industriels modernes, l'art moderne (also referred to as modernistic) was a major commercial style designed to supplant the eccentricities of art nouveau. As it happened, it was no less decoratively ostentatious, but in a more "modern" and thus contemporary way. Rather than curvilinear, its signature motifs were rectilinear; instead of excessive amounts of floriated decoration, it was more machine-like in its linearity. The term *art deco* is a contraction of the original exposition coined in the 1970s for one of the exhibitions to show off deco's wares. The style did, however, underscore not only a period but also an attitude that continues to hold sway as a marker of the period when it flourished.

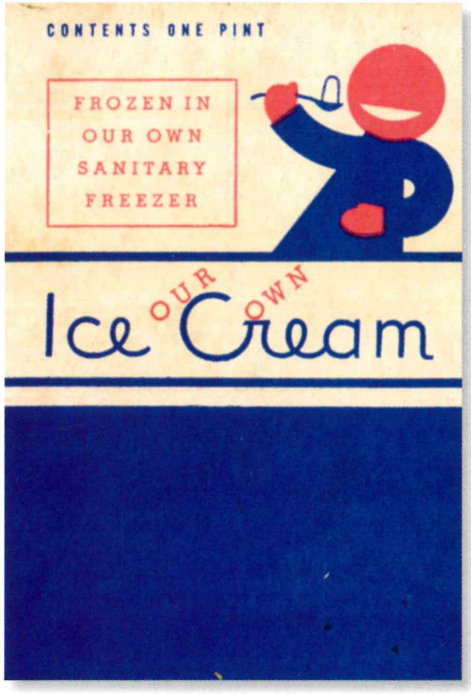


ART NOUVEAU

Launched in Paris in 1896 after the first waves of Japonisme (1870s) hit French shores, art nouveau had many names in various nations, but each shared the sinuous, natural stylistic conceits, creeping tendrils, vines, and plant life, or what one critic later called "floriated madness." It evolved into Jugendstil in Germany, Stile Liberty in Italy, Vienna Secession in Austria, modernismo in Spain, Bohemian Secession in Eastern Europe, and more. The rich avant-garde style broke from academic as well as baroque, rococo, and other traditions through truly radical departures in type, illustration, page, and poster designs. Art nouveau is an explicit period marker, but in its revived form it helped define the psychedelic style of the 1960s.

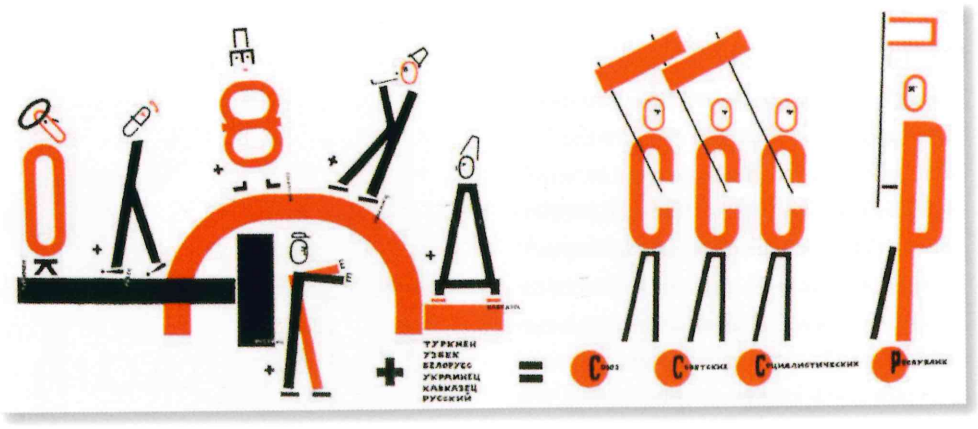
BAUHAUS

Among the most progressive early-twentieth-century European design schools, the Staatliches Bauhaus (Weimar from 1919 to 1925, Dessau from 1925 to 1932, and Berlin from 1932 to 1933) was famously antistyle. But the Bauhaus had a philosophy that in its later first home in Weimar and second incarnation in Berlin was a clear visual signature in terms of type, typography, and layout. The look that is most overtly Bauhausian was influenced in part by Russian constructivism and Dutch de Stijl. It was characterized by limited color (usually red and black, though blue was also used) and sans serif typography, usually set in an asymmetrical manner. The typographic style is referred to as quintessentially modern, representative of what **Jan Tschichold** called Elementare Typographie or the New Typography, which became a style of its own.



COMMERCIAL MODERNISM

From the early 1920s through the middle 1930s, L'Art Moderne evolved in the United States into a retooling of product and package called streamlining. Aerodynamics was applied to the veneers of machines and appliances, including automobiles, refrigerators, and vacuum cleaners. Graphically, this took the form of smooth, sleek airbrush rendering. Commercial modernism was the "futuristic" typographic and graphic design manifestation used primarily in the selling —or "styling"—of the goods, akin to (though not exactly) art deco.

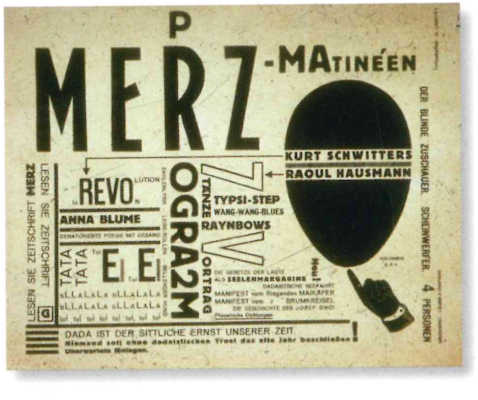


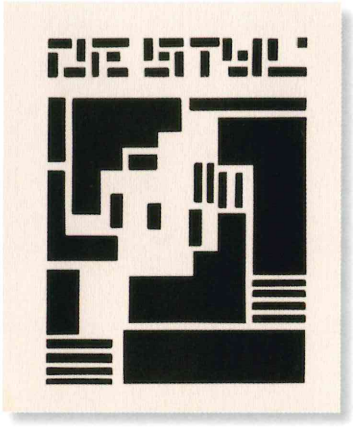
CONSTRUCTIVISM

Developed in the Soviet Union in the optimistic wake of the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution, constructivism was an art and architectural movement for the Soviet new society. It touched graphic design in major ways, too, ultimately influencing the Bauhaus and the New Typography. The constructivists, and their productivist offshoots, rejected the idea of art for art's sake as the vestige of the bourgeois class to which previous art had been catered. Its leaders were early proponents of abstract art, and the design of posters and books, while readable, involved abstraction. The term *construction art* was first coined by the painter/poet **Kazimir Malevich** in reference to the designer **Aleksander Rodchenko**, who, in addition to photomontage, used metal type -case materials to build his typographic lay-outs. Heavy bars, stark bold types (both serif and sans), and photomontage are hallmarks. Constructivism can be found in product packaging, logos, posters, book covers, and advertisements. Rodchenko's graphic design works became an inspiration to many Western designers.

DADA

Dada was a nonsense word that signified the twentieth century's first anti-art art movement, from 1916 to 1924, that waged war on the status quo. Dada was affixed to acts of cultural disruption and developed its own metalanguage, which only Dadas could understand. The language appeared in an international review that expressed the Dada gospel through a rambunctious display of expressionism, futurism, cubism, experimental poetry, anarchic imagery, and confrontational manifestos. But ultimately, the overarching character of Dada was forged through its typography. Dada forced the eye to see differently by changing the common perception of the written word, attacking rectilinear conventions of the printed page and breaking apart the sequential order of typeset lines. Italics were thrown in haphazardly, capitals and minuscules were applied at random—all to achieve a disruptive jolt. Dada crusaded against the sanctioned conveyance of meaning by shouting and screaming and thus imitating sound through printed words.



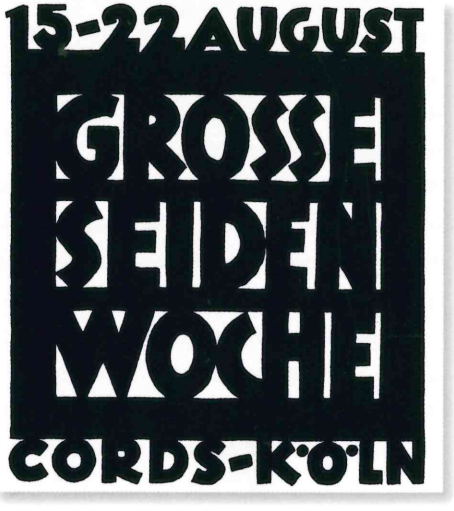


DE STIJL

De Stijl, the Dutch avant-garde design movement, treated pure geometry as something sacred. In 1917, de Stijl emerged as a reductive aesthetic language. The manifesto proclaimed all plastic form derived directly from the rectangle—because it introduced natural order to art—and the three primary colors, plus black. Although rectilinearity was common to all modern movements, for the Dutch it was a matter of faith. **Theo van Doesburg** (born Christian E.M. Küpper), **Vilmos Huszar, Antony Kok, Bart van der Leck, Piet Mondrian,** and **J.J.P. Oud** founded the group. Van Doesburg edited and designed its journal, *de Stijl*, and through its frequently mutating format was an innovator of modern graphic design. The logo for the early issues of *de Stijl* was designed from rectangular patterns arranged on a strict grid and had an emblematic blocky appearance. Van Doesburg defined type design and typography as the offspring of straight lines and rectilinear geometry.

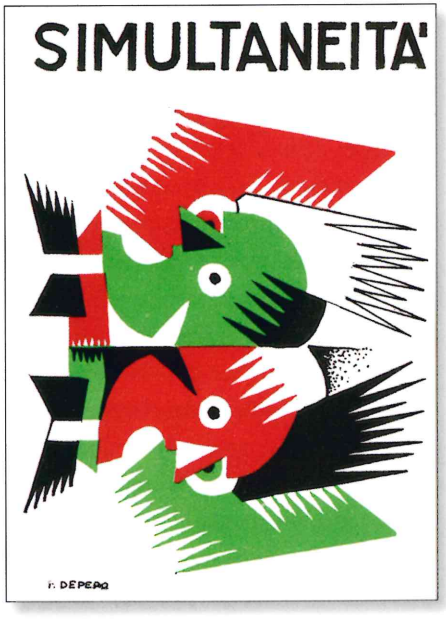
EXPRESSIONISM

German expressionism was founded in 1905. Later, two expressionist groups, **Die Brücke** in 1905 and **Der Blaue Reiter** in 1912, emerged. The former was engaged in figuration and the latter in abstraction. The offspring of their collective radicalism is a visual language influenced by primitive iconography, including African totems and masks. Expressionists preferred the woodcut, a medium that resists perfection, because the hard surface was resistant to any forms of subtlety. Woodblocks required that artists violently gouge the wood to make their marks—they were forced to struggle, which in turn allowed the artists to reveal their emotions, resulting in rawness that stripped the respective subjects to their primal states. Deformation of the figure was employed to heighten the intensity of expression. Prior to World War I, expressionism attacked the status quo mostly in metaphysical terms. After 1918, following the November Revolution that installed a republic in war-ravaged Imperial Germany, many in the movement became more fervently political, allying themselves with Socialist and Communist parties.
The raw graphic style they adopted from expressionism stripped away both artifice and propriety with the goal of creating formal visual language of the revolution. The expressionists did not produce commercial typefaces, but they did influence others.



FASCIST

Take one part L'Art Moderne, two parts heroic, along with a dollop of futurist lettering, and the result would be youth-oriented Italian Fascist styling. Although not the sole style of the Fascist Party and state, it was the primary visual signature for a movement that aimed its allure at youth culture. The airbrush quality and kinetic type style of Fascism is direct but without the sledgehammer approach of faux Italian classicism, which sought to promote the party as the vanguard of the new Roman Empire. Instead, this style was rather inspirational.



FUTURISM

Italian futurism was a cultural insurgency that insisted art and design were inextricably linked to machine-age technology; the graphic style that best expressed their ideology was a noisy, dissonant cacophony of letters, types, and words that was a curious mixture of archaic letterforms and futuristic compositions. **Filippo T. Marinetti's** *First Futurist Manifesto*, published in 1909, was a paean to progress and a call to arms. Futurist manifestos were written in impassioned prose and composed in bombastic layouts with type that exploded on the printed page. Futurism was a radical shift in type and layout from reliance on staid central axis composition to dynamic asymmetry. Typeset and hand-drawn letterforms were no longer quietly or elegantly printed on a page; they were transformed into vibrant onomatopoeia. The goal was to recast language by eliminating conventional grammar and syntax, and this was manifest in the invention of his most emblematic visual/verbal poetic form, parole in liberta (words-in-freedom), which he created specifically to express notions of speed through a compositional economy of means.

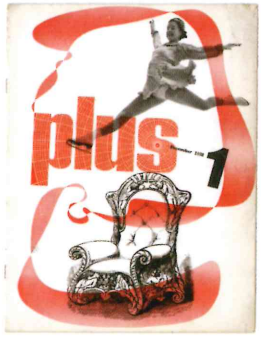
HEROIC

Heroic style, found in almost all countries, idealizes the common man and beatifies the common leader. For centuries, graphic propagandists have created icons extolling fake strengths and false virtues. Heroic representation is a pose—credible myths and acceptable legends. A heroic figure, such as the lock-jawed, broad-shouldered humannequins devised by the German poster artist **Ludwig Hohlwein** (1874–1949), forged indelible bonds with the audience. Realism is the primary trope, and this involves romanticizing those depicted in such a way that what remains is a heroic shell. Heroic realism recalls the icons of ancient Rome. Yet every period is replete with its own heroic imagery conforming to specific needs. Whether called socialist realism, national socialist realism, heroic realism, or just plain realism, the all-heroic imagery is designed to achieve the same effect. **Elbert Hubbard**, founder of the Roycrofters, said, "The heroic man does not pose; he leaves that for the man who wishes to be thought heroic."

INTERNATIONAL STYLE

Until the mid-1960s, the international style was big "D" design. The most ubiquitous graphic design in the United States and Europe was based on the modern Swiss grid. Then came the sixties, a confluence of radical politics and youth culture—a reassessment of sacred canon leading to a purposeful rejection of the old order, which in terms of design was, curiously, modernism. Some say that 1965 was the year that the modern became old fashioned, not only causing semantic confusion but forcing proponents to reassess their life's work. In fact, modernism was in such a state of flux during that time that the postmodern nomenclature had to be coined in the early 1970s so that art historians and cultural pundits had some means of describing the ensuing disquiet and the next evolutionary stage.

MODERNISM



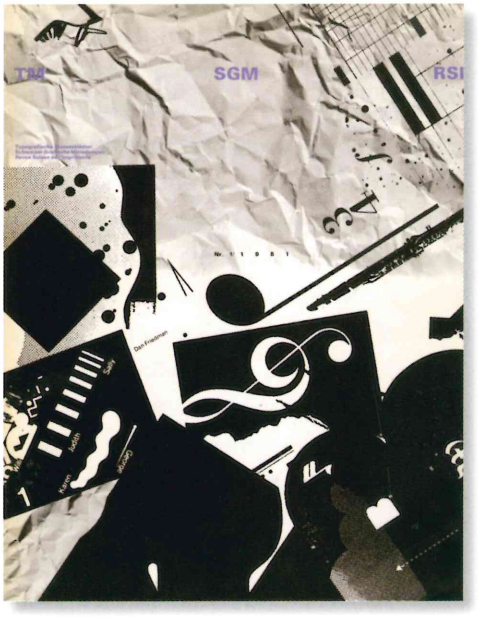
The term *modern* literally means "up to date" and has been used to describe fashionable artworks and movements, but modernism specifically refers to the progressive design period between the two World Wars—the age of L'Esprit Nouveau, the Bauhaus, and de Stijl. The masters of orthodox modernism vehemently denied that their reductive and functional art and design was a style; rather, it was a way of life, an ethical and moral system. It was a purposeful rejection of bourgeois historicism and sentimentalism that dominated European design until the early twentieth century. But it did have common denominators and a look. Modernists challenged prevailing aesthetics and beliefs with reductivist principles. Simplicity, asymmetry, and minimalism were among the common traits that dictated white space and sans serif type. That was the beginning. European modernism evolved into what **Philip Johnson** and **Henry-Russell Hitchcock** called the international style, exerting influence in architecture, furniture, and graphic design. The prevailing style of multinational corporations was simplicity, which made international communications more legible and comprehensible.

NEW TYPOGRAPHY

By the 1920s, a reevaluation of typographic and layout standards occurred when designers practicing the New Typography embraced classical ideals of legibility yet, reflecting on their contemporary, machine-age times, opted for a change in typographic methodologies. The young **Jan Tschichold**, a German type designer who codified the new style, led this movement. Central axis composition, for example, was rejected in favor of asymmetry, but even more significant was the mission of these "modern" designers to expunge the mediocre, the vernacular types and typographies that appeared on signs, bills, and advertisements, which represented rote rather than sophisticated design thinking. The New Typography was both a language and style that proffered reductive or "elementary" methods. Its goal was universality, but its rationalism appealed to the needs of only certain kinds of businesses and corporations. Strict grids and austere sans serif typefaces were not always appropriate for, say, a milk carton, detergent package, or supermarket sign that demanded stark, sometimes crass eye-catching immediacy to capture a consumer's attention. But the New Typography attempted to influence them all.

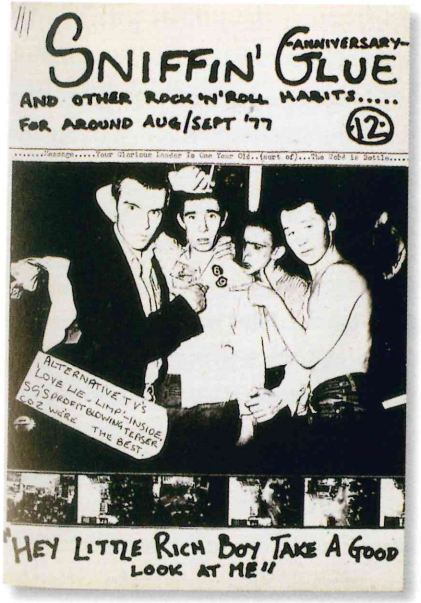
POSTMODERN

After modernism, then what? Postmodern (PM) graphic design emerged roughly in the mid-80s, reached its stylistic zenith during the late-90s, and was characterized by stylistic eclecticism. It started before the computer but derives much of its thrust from the Macintosh revolution that spawned the first wave of digital type design and later ad hoc fontography. An academic style, it integrated theory, politics, and social relations into design practice and by extension influenced the typographical fashion of the moment: deconstruction. This was an intellectual approach of analyzing texts introduced by poststructuralist critic **Jacques Derrida** that challenged the receiver of visual and textual messages to comprehend the complexity of meaning. Layering, distortion, and density are PM traits created as much to emote as to be read. Postmodern was not monolithic. Other groupings of styles were welcome in the big tent. Proponents of new wave (which **Gary Panter** called "sterilized punk"), grunge, post-punk, retro pastiche, and vernacular took pains to throw off the yoke (or grid) that Swiss modernism had imposed since the early fifties. PM promoted complexity over simplicity, objectivity routing subjectivity, and ornament defeating austerity.



PSYCHEDELIC

During the late 1960s, the psychedelic style grew out of the hippie counterculture, which hailed hallucinogenic drugs and rock. Characterized by seemingly illegible typefaces, vibrating colors, and vintage illustrations, psychedelic art was a rebellious graphic language created to communicate with an exclusive community and for a short time excluded all others until it was adopted as the youth culture code. The overall psychedelic visual language was composed of a fairly consistent assortment of recurring elements: Public domain images, including engravings, old photos, labels, postcards, and other commercial ephemera, were frequently used. Custom psychedelic typefaces were hand drawn based on Victorian and art nouveau models—everything that was passé was inherently antiestablishment. There were layers of graphic effluvia common to all psychedelic art, yet the compositions were often strategically arranged and obsessively sketched—nothing was left to chance. Although being stoned may have added to the enjoyment of psychedelic posters, it wasn't altogether necessary. Certain art and design tenets were rejected, but once the new ones were learned, the work was perfectly legible and accessible.

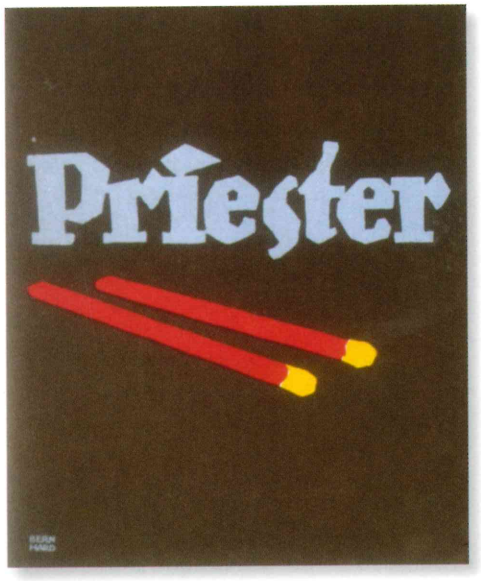


PUNK

Like Dada, punk (or its contemporary, grunge) is authentic anti-design design. Purposefully ad hoc, the style represents a deliberate rejection of graphic design rules. The term *punk*, which denotes petty thugs and jailhouse paramours, is echoed by graphics meant to be dirty and uncouth—a violent rejection of pseudo-psychedelic hippie pop. There are various punk strains with different design signatures. English punks argue that their ransom note and magic marker graphics are free of any professional contamination and more like Dada. Yet there are plenty of punk albums, periodicals, and posters that conform to at least a small semblance of conventional techniques. The devices that gave punk its look—cut-out letters, ripped clothing, safety pins, and Day-Glo—quickly became design clichés, like psychedelia, either co-opted or happily adopted by the mainstream.

RETRO

Retro (or pastiche) is the act of reusing timeworn stylistic mannerisms as part of contemporary graphic design. The retro use of any accepted style is an effortless way to establish familiar graphic codes with limited risk. Retro can give new products instant heritage and old ones an opportunity to flag their authenticity, even where it does not exist. Retro is one of the more dependable tools for sparking a certain kind of consumer interest in certain products by saying something is old yet new—combining vintage values and current attitudes. Arguably, retro is not a design style but a marketing term invented by retailers, a catchall used to label products inspired by the past (one hundred or ten years ago) and to inveigle their products into the consumers' consciousness. Nonetheless, drawing from historical references is not only a pejorative—rather than rob the design tombs, some designers integrate historical forms into their respective styles.



SACHPLAKAT

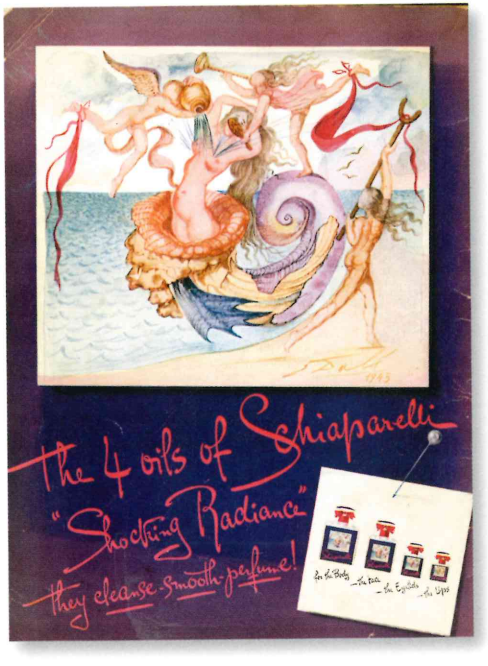
An early-twentieth-century advertising poster genre in Germany known as *plakatstil* (poster style) was the umbrella for a submovement known for extreme simplicity known as *sachplakat* (object poster). Sachplakat's acknowledged inventor was an eighteen-year-old named **Lucian Bernhard** who, in 1906, entered a poster competition sponsored by Berlin's Priester Match Company. His first sketch was typically art nouveau (or jugendstil): It included a cigar in an ashtray on a checked tablecloth with dancing nymphets formed by the intertwining tobacco smoke. Next to the ashtray were two wooden matches. A friend mistakenly complimented Bernhard on the excellent cigar advertisement, which forced him to rethink the composition and, one after another, he began eliminating everything but the two matches, which were enlarged, painted in red with yellow tips, and placed on a dark maroon field. At the top of the image area he lettered "Priester" by hand in bold block letters—simplicity personified—and sachplakat was born. Art nouveau met its démise not because of Bernhard's accidental invention, but because visual complexity no longer achieved the desired results.

SOCIAL AND SOCIALIST REALISM

In 1934, Stalin and author **Maxim Gorky** devised a new doctrine called socialist realism. It started as a literary decree but quickly influenced the visual arts as well. Socialist realism rejected formalism as bourgeois influences on art. It abolished all works of art (and eventually persecuted all artists) that were suspected of harboring personal creative agendas. Ironically, what replaced abstraction was a romantic and heroic worldview not all that pictorially different from American social realism's murals that celebrated the worker, labor, and industry. But unlike American social realism fostered by the government, socialist realism was imposed upon all Soviet artists, who were forced to belong to sanctioned artists' unions. True realists, naturalists, impressionists—those accused of being aloof from the daily struggle of the proletariat—were removed from artistic life. Soviet art historian and critic **Vladimir Kemenov** said, "Soviet artists present the wholesome and integral art of socialist realism, expressed in profound artistic images reflecting true life, showing the struggle between the old and the new and the inevitable triumph of the new and progressive, an art mobilizing Soviet people for further victories." Socialist realism, which included graphic design and photography based on detailed, faux realistic depiction, took the edges off the grit of reality, providing instead an ideal or heroic vision.

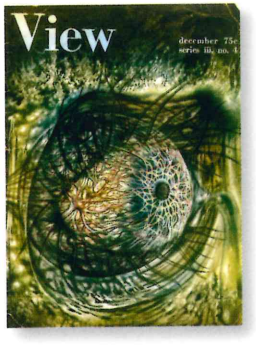
STREAMLINE

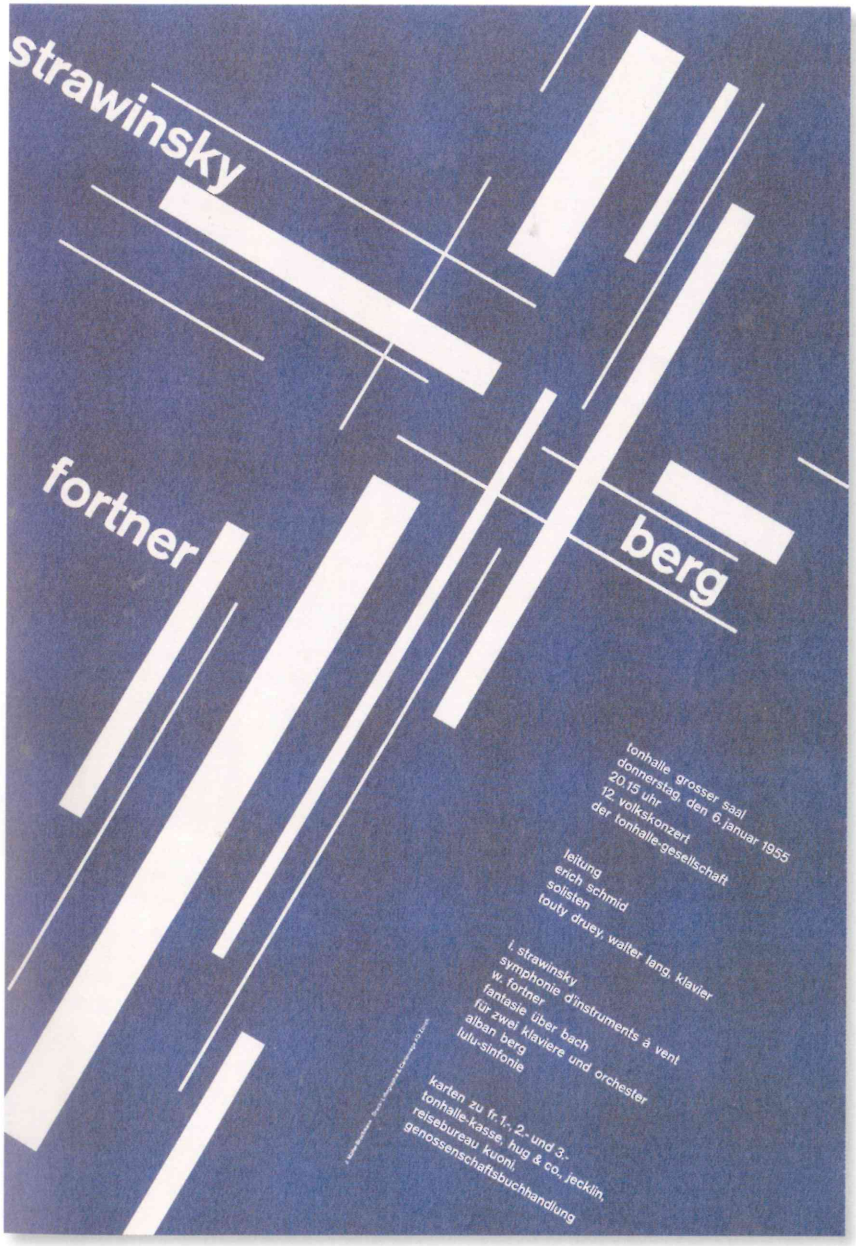
Streamline was a distinctly American modern design style that began during the 1920s and 1930s. It is often confused with art deco, which shared some of its visual characteristics. Streamline introduced the industrial designer. In an effort to stimulate consumption, they crusaded against outmoded industrial output that resulted in the application of new futuristic veneers signaling the machine-made attributes of products and commodities. Influenced by modern art, which to a certain degree was inspired by the machine itself, the industrial designer was not rebelling against mass production, but rather embraced it. Streamlining was built on aerodynamic principles; for this reason, the teardrop shape derived because it allowed for more rapid movement. Modernistic graphics, characterized by sleek airbrushed veneers, framed and "dressed," were otherwise quaint and timeworn products. Marketing strategists developed the illusion of progress by using type and images that were seductively progressive, or what the industrial designer **Raymond Loewy** called MAYA, "most advanced yet acceptable."



SURREALISM

Surrealism was a liberation of the unconscious activity of the mind. In 1924, it began as a literary style that involved automatic or subconscious writing, but soon the dreamlike language of surrealism was manifest in pictorial art. Surrealism induced physical and mental vertigo that both stimulated and sabotaged perception. Surrealistic imagery had been used without the label in the popular arts since the mid-nineteenth century. The macabre, dreamlike cartoons by French caricaturist **J.J. Grandville**, circa 1850, prefigured contemporary science-fiction art and surrealistic musings. By the late 1930s, surrealism had become a common trope for many commercial artists in various disciplines. Both mysterious and accessible, surrealism provided a modern means to visually express complex as well as simplistic ideas. The art critic **Lucy Lippard** calls surrealism "house broken Dada . . . Northern fantasy subjected to French lucidity." As commercial art, surrealism was a benign tool used for advertising perfumes and cosmetics, not a revolutionary language.



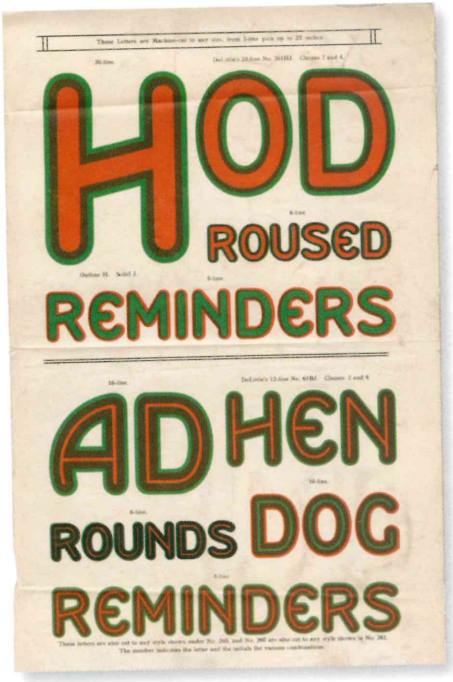


SWISS

The Swiss School, or International Typographic Style, which emerged in the late 1940s, absorbed aspects of de Stijl, the Bauhaus, and the New Typography. Its philosophical goal to achieve objective clarity through graphic design evolved into a common graphic language of businesses worldwide. Swiss layouts were constructed of pure geometric elements and organized mathematically on a grid. Akzidenz-Grotesk type (a well-proportioned late-nineteenth-century sans serif typeface), flush left and ragged right settings, and paragraphs indicated by an "interval space" instead of the conventional paragraph indent were key components of the International Typographic Style. It was also laden with strict typographic hierarchies and spacial considerations wherein only one type style (in one or two weights) served all the basic informational and navigational needs in the same layout. Relative importance was shown through changes in point size or weight and the position of the type on the grid. Invisible grids had long been present in classical design, but the overt application of modular units, geometric progressions, and mathematical sequences were laid down as strict rules. Sans serif type was the most emblematic component of the International Typographic Style. In 1954, **Adrian Frutiger** designed Univers (the name presumed its universal adoption in English-speaking countries), a mathematically constructed and visually programmed family with twenty-one variations (expanded, bold, condensed, etc.) indicated by number. In 1956, **Edouard Hoffman** decided that it was time to refine Akzidenz-Grotesk and collaborated with **Max Miedinger** on a well-defined sans serif known as Neue Haas Grotesk (so named for the Hass type foundry in Switzerland). When it was produced in Germany by D. Stempel foundry in 1961, the name was surprisingly changed to Helvetica.

VICTORIAN

The Victorian era from 1837 to 1901 marked a span of eclectic design that exerted profound influence on graphics the world over. The term *Victorian* and all the stylistic manifestations it came to represent was not, however, exclusive to England but was used to describe analogous historical revivals in Europe and the United States during the second half of the nineteenth century. Graphic design (though not yet referred to as such) was an assimilation of Byzantine, Romanesque, and rococo sensibilities, drowning in excessive revivalist ornamentation that was both quaint and exciting. Typeface and page design reveled in ornamental flourish that directly related to architectural aesthetics. Graphic stylists—from job printers to bookmakers—appropriated the decorative tropes of Victorian facades and monuments. Magazine and newspaper illustrations were minutely detailed with ornate filigrees often in which typefaces and customized lettering appeared to be carved as though in stone. Considering the cumbersome wood and metal engraving techniques necessary to create these eccentric concoctions, the results are remarkably and intricately precise. Printers worked with the standard metal and wood types, but if they didn't have enough of one font they didn't think twice about including others together on one line or composition. The Victorian style of disparate faces on a single page derives from this banal necessity.



VERNACULAR

Vernacular is simply a common language that we all know. In graphic design, vernacular broadly refers to what was once called everyday "commercial art," including signage, packaging, advertisements, publications, and so on, that constitute quotidian "mass culture." There are many vernacular accents: A Tide detergent box, for instance, did not become the quintessential package design that it is through Darwinian natural selection, but rather, because its type and decorative motif have been impressed upon mass consciousness through repeated promotion and display. The Tide detergent package is so commonplace today that it is often copied and parodied. Vernacular was a word, not a style, until in the late 1980s when **Tibor Kalman** used untutored, retrofitted typography for sophisticated design projects. By embracing what was once considered crass as part of the design discourse, Kalman elevated commonplace layout to the exceptional artifact. Vernacular may be considered a subset of retro—the revival of what was once everyday, making it more rarified, if only for the moment.