

BEAUTY FROM FUNCTION: THE IDENTIFICATION AND  
IMPLEMENTATION OF SWISS GRAPHIC DESIGN  
PRINCIPLES IN CONTEMPORARY ADVERTISING

by

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### BEAUTY FROM FUNCTION: THE IDENTIFICATION AND IMPLIMENTATION OF SWISS GRAPHIC DESIGN PRINCIPLES IN CONTEMPORARY ADVERTISING

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Throughout the modernist period of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Swiss designers of all types were some of the most prolific influencers of design. From the creation of the iconic Helvetica typeface to the application of architectural grid systems in commercial design, Swiss artists were dedicated to creating functional, communicative, and beautiful designs. Through many conversations and schools of thought, Swiss graphic design was born, gaining international recognition in 1958 with the first publication of *Neue Grafik*. Artists like Max Bill, Josef Müller-Brockmann, and Armin Hofmann curated a new form of visual communication through a set of rigid principles and pure dedication. This thesis seeks to identify those principles and apply them to a modern brand in an attempt to honor the tradition of Swiss graphic design and to carry on their legacy of commercial design's capability of claiming artistic value.

## **Acknowledgements**

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I would also like to thank my family for being always being willing to discuss my passion for design and critiquing my work from an objective standpoint. Finally, I would like to thank Nick Mau and Dakoata Lutje for being such a solid team to rely on when it came to finding motivation, support, and guidance from my peers. This has been such an incredible learning experience, and everyone mentioned had such a major role in the completion of this project.

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## **Introduction**

Design is omnipresent. From the text on this page to the logo on the processor of the computer this paper is being written on, nearly everything we as consumers and individuals interact with was created with intention by a designer. In a digital age it has never been easier for everything we come into contact with to be branded in some way. Similarly, it has never been easier to be a designer. Countless YouTube design tutorials, cheap software provided via subscription, and websites like Behance and AIGA make the design process more democratic than ever. This democratization of creativity and artistry completely changed the way in which we define the artistic era in which we live.

In the modernist era art could easily be categorized as by assessing its content. Design styles had certain rules and guidelines with which artists would create their pieces. However, in a postmodern era, artistic classification isn't so simple. That murkiness is exactly what defines the postmodern movement. The democratization of design and the creation of the postmodern era was largely in direct response to the rigid guidelines modernism placed upon artists. Postmodernism refused and rejected any semblance of an overarching style and blurred the lines between high culture and popular culture. This destruction of rigidity and separation "introduced a new era of freedom and a sense that 'anything goes'" (Tate). Like many other individuals, it was in this era that I grew up and began my relationship with design.

### **A new discovery.**

For as long as I can remember I have always had a penchant for design. Whether it manifested itself in woodworking or drawing, design in its many forms had always

been a focal point in my childhood. It wasn't until I reached high school that I was first introduced to graphic design when I was given a drawing tablet and started using photoshop to design shoes, logos, and various art projects. For a long time, I saw this as nothing more than a hobby and did not even consider the numerous ways in which graphic design was applied in the professional world. Upon my arrival at university, I was introduced to design in a whole new way. I realized that design was much more than an artistic outlet, but rather a vehicle through which complex ideas and concepts could be communicated.

Through a combination of both advertising and design classes I came to appreciate the way in which graphic design could carry messages and became critical of the styles in which companies would do so. Through typography workshops, magazine design courses, and spec campaign work I began to find myself increasingly attracted to design styles that favored artistry and communicative transparency over the exaggerated and flashy ads that many companies often relied on to capture the attention of consumers.





Figure 1: An example of an advertisement that I would consider to be exaggerated and lacking creativity.

While this advertisement clearly adheres to some sort of visual guide, it is overbearing and lacks the subtlety that makes for an artistic portrayal of information, like the advertisement below executes so well.

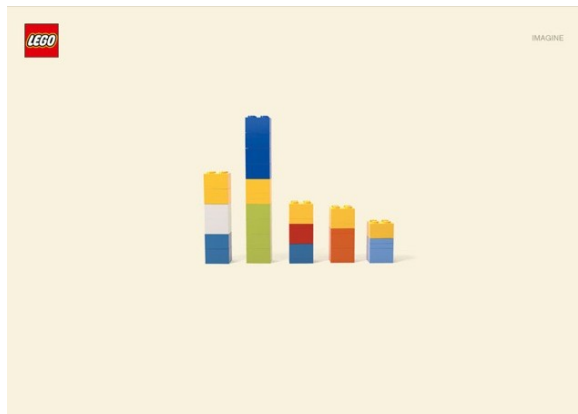


Figure 2: An example of what I would consider to be an advertisement that I would consider artful and clear in terms of communication.

Although the postmodern era we live in tends to favor individuality and freedom within design, I found many of the ads we studied to come across as lacking intention rather than rejecting formal guidelines. For this reason, I began to gravitate toward designers who seemed to reflect the structural components of modernist design, while still retaining their own individual flair within the designs. My intrigue in a particular style led me to social media platforms such as Instagram and Behance where I discovered advertising agencies and production shops that often utilized what I

eventually learned was a graphic design style known as International Typographic Style, or more commonly known as Swiss Graphic Design (SGD).

Creative agencies such as FISK, Something Special Studios, High Tide, and Studio Temp all caught my attention because, while they were technically advertising agencies (to varying degrees) they all seemed to place importance on communication through design in the way in which they crafted advertisements. Everything was incredibly intentional and while each design team had their own look and feel, they all relied on an invisible set of guidelines to achieve a desired effect. Not only did the way in which they design advertisements make me want to buy the item, it also made me want to hang the advertisement in my room as a piece of art. It was with this discovery that I realized that advertisements did not have to sacrifice artistry to be effective in selling a good. Instead, artistry could enhance the desirability of an item by simply highlighting a good's function through quality, communicative design.

### **Next steps.**

With this revelation, I felt a new inspiration and excitement for the possibility of commercial design that could be beautiful and have an artful quality to it. I knew this passion had to be channeled somewhere and after some discussion with my thesis prospectus instructor, Professor Mai-Lin Cheng, I was determined to delve deeper into SGD and implement it into my thesis in some way. While I knew that I wanted to create a portfolio piece along with the written part of my thesis, I wasn't sure how exactly I would go about it. While at first I was tempted to try and recreate the way in which traditional SGD advertisements were produced, I found that I lacked fundamental experience in many of the technologies used by the founding designers of the style. I

then considered redesigning modern advertisements in the style of SGD and creating a commentary on how artistry could still be implemented in today's advertising, but I found that to be belittling to equally valid forms of graphic design simply because I wasn't as keen on the aesthetic appeal. Ultimately, I decided to find a middle ground between the two ideas.

For my creative project I will identify the general rules and guidelines that SGD relies upon and create a style guide. I will then implement this style guide in the rebranding of a modern company that fits the criteria of an appropriate company as laid out by the founders of this style of design. By rebranding a company using modern technology while adhering to the rules of traditional SGD, my goal is to bridge a gap between modernist and postmodernist design in a way that pays tribute to the digital landscape in which I was educated as a designer while demonstrating that modern advertising can maintain its craftsmanship and artistic value and remain functional.

### **Existing literature.**

While the process of rebranding a company in the style of SGD seemed like an easy task at first, the lack of general literature on the subject posed a problem. In order to accurately apply the rules of SGD to a company's identity, I first had to figure out what exactly those rules for design were. While there is certainly literature that discusses SGD as a whole, not much of it goes into detail as to what makes a piece of design eligible to fit within the genre. In order to fill this vital gap this thesis will rely on an analysis of two types of sources. The first type of source that will be examined is literature on the history of SGD and how it became an international phenomenon. The second type of source is sample works from the designers that originally propagated the

style. Through both textual and visual analyses, a frame of reference will be made so that the rebranding of the company fits within the boundaries of SGD in an authentic way.

### *1. The History of Swiss Graphic Design*

Before beginning to understand the reasoning behind specific artistic qualities and motifs within SGD, it is imperative that the origin of the style be understood. In general, the existing literature surrounding SGD is quite limited and often more conversational than professional. However, the one area of scholarly exploration into this style that is somewhat prevalent is in reference to the political and social climate surrounding the birth of SGD. The most in-depth source that is readily available is Richard Hollis' *Swiss Graphic Design: The Origins and Growth of an International Style, 1920-1965*. Hollis' *Swiss Graphic Design* is a comprehensive overview of the many eras of design that eventually led to the solidification of what is now known as SGD. Books like Hollis' are imperative in discovering the internal and external factors that motivated designers and design groups to reject previous styles of design in favor of something they believed was unequivocally new and right. Hollis' deep understanding of the history of designers, movements, and works that contributed to the global interest in Swiss style will be instrumental in cultivating a foundation for my own analysis of what constitutes SGD, as well as allowing for a deeper and more complete understanding for the audience.

While books dedicated completely to exploring the creation of SGD, like Hollis' *Swiss Graphic Design*, are few and far between there is a plethora of online posts, discussions, and chronologies that bolster the limited scope of literature. Online

magazines and publishing groups such as AIGA, Design Is History, and Smashing Magazine are just a few of many websites that have sections dedicated to the discussion of SGD and how it came to be such an international phenomenon. This kind of literature, while much less in depth and slightly more anecdotal than Hollis' research, provides a good source of supporting evidence to much of the information discussed within Hollis' book.

## 2. *Visual Collections*

Arguably more useful to this thesis than books directly relating to the history of SGD are catalogues containing the actual designs created by the designers at the forefront of the movement. While locating historical accounts of the creation of SGD proved somewhat difficult, books containing in depth analysis of art were much easier to find. One of the most useful pieces of literature that contains examples of work from Swiss designers is Lars Müller's book on the notorious designer and SGD front man, Josef Müller-Brockmann. Müller's book, *Josef Müller-Brockmann, Designer: a Pioneer of Swiss Graphic Design*, provides countless examples of SGD designed by Müller-Brockmann and his contemporaries, along with accounts of their graphic reasoning and processes. Müller-Brockmann's ability to craft communication driven designs that still portray a sense of tension and drama--usually found in higher art forms at the time--make him one of the best designers of the Swiss style.

While this source is mainly focused on artistic examples of SGD, it inherently contributes to the creation of a graphic history as well, effectively blurring the lines between the two types of literature that are currently available. This line is also blurred by the works that mainly focus on the history of SGD, like Hollis' book, because of the

numerous visual examples provided by the author. Ultimately, although the focus of the two types of current literature are distinct (literary versus visual) they both lend to the creation of a succinct, accurate, and easily digestible history of the creation of SGD and its progression. The one thing that is missing from this set of literature, however, is a clear and accessible set of rules for individuals interested in creating work in the style of SGD.

### **Where does this fit?**

Although there are many examples of how SGD is portrayed and the types of contexts in which it can be applied, it is difficult to find a complete set of guiding principles to reference when attempting to replicate the design style in a digital era. This thesis aims to bridge the gap between historical accounts and visual examples and produce a complete guide to SGD. Furthermore, once the guiding principles are identified and solidified, they will be applied to the rebranding of a company that fits within the criteria briefly alluded to within primary sources such as *Neue Grafik*, the flagship magazine that garnered SGD international attention. Ultimately, I hope that the portfolio portion of this thesis will prove useful for other individuals who are passionate about bringing artistry back into mainstream advertising. I hope that a clear description of SGD's guiding principles and an example of implementation will inspire designers to return to a form of design that is driven by clear communication and artistry.

### **My personal connection.**

Throughout my time in the School of Journalism and Communication I have taken many classes revolving around advertising design and often found myself feeling relatively disconnected from the art styles that were most often used, specifically in

print advertisements. When I first started taking classes from Steven Asbury, however, I was introduced to an entirely new way of conceptual thinking in terms of how forms and typography can communicate messages. It was through these classes that I began to question the extent to which advertising can be considered artful, a predicament I later found to be central to the thought processes of many of the designers who created SGD. Through this thesis I hope to gain a deeper understanding of advertising design as a whole, how it can be considered an art form, and put much of what I have learned during my time as an advertising student to the test.

## **A Brief History of Swiss Graphic Design**

When attempting to uncover and identify the driving forces behind design decisions with SGD, it is important to first have a basic understanding of the political, social, and cultural environments that fostered the style itself. Design, like many other cultural signifiers, is often representative of both external and internal forces experienced by the practitioners of the style, and SGD is no exception. SGD began its long journey to international recognition in the 1920s and was born from a combination of three overarching factors, as identified by Hollis in *Swiss Graphic Design*. First, the country's location and political neutrality. Switzerland's overall stability and societal emphasis on creative thinking and problem solving allowed for creative minds to flourish. Second, language. The northern section of Switzerland shared the same language as Germany, "where progressive ideas were proposed, attacked, and defended in the 1920's" (Hollis 9). Third, cultural factors such as precision, craft skills, educational and technical training systems, enlightened artistic attitudes, and enjoyment of "graphic culture" made it easy for SGD to take hold in its home country.

The overall investment in design within Switzerland, including typography, led to an increase in efficiency and general graphic appeal across multiple economic areas. Large economic players such as pharmaceutical companies and engineering agencies, and even smaller enterprises such as tourism, all ultimately benefited from Switzerland's investment in aesthetics (Hollis 9). Design became so embedded in Swiss culture that they adopted it into much of their federal infrastructure as well, even becoming the first country with a professionally designed passport. Banknotes, postage stamps, and Swiss charities all benefited from the country's interest in creating a



cohesive aesthetic in many public sectors. Switzerland continued to advocate for design by hosting a “Best Poster of the Year” competition, run by the Ministry of the Interior in hopes of drumming up even more interest (Hollis 9).

Post-war Switzerland, like many other countries, saw an explosion of political and cultural upheaval. This resulted in new aesthetics and art styles being created through political posters, specifically in Russia. Although Switzerland remained neutral during the war, the influx of emigres, political refugees, and pacifists created a powerful cultural movement. Started in the streets by artists and intellectuals, the demand for change was spearheaded by “like-minded creative people - Modernists” (Hollis 10). From these thinkers and creators came “an abstract, geometrical style” with which they set about creating a new world with. With the New York stock exchange triggering a global economic crisis and Hitler and Mussolini at either end of Switzerland’s borders, tensions within the country further increased. Even with such tensions, the modernist movement persisted through the war and aspects of constructivism and concrete art were mixed into the modernist aesthetic ideology, and thus constructive graphic design was born. It was here in the 1930’s that SGD truly began to take hold.

As constructive design continued to develop and gain notoriety, avant-garde thinkers began arriving from war torn Germany. Photographers and graphic artists join the likes of commercial graphic designers like Max Bill and objective photography was quickly enveloped into the ever-changing visual identity of SGD (Muller 14). While many of the avant-garde ideals were included in aspects of SGD, they began to be seen as elitist by members of the Swiss modernist movement like Bill. Bill, however, took what he learned from the avant-garde artists and applied it to his studies in commercial

graphic design. SGD hit a speed bump in the mid 1930s as the Swiss government employed designers to return to classical Swiss aesthetics in an attempt to combat the threat of fascism (Muller 15). Although the war served as a pause in the advancement of SGD, it did have certain advantages later on. After his service in the war, established illustrator Josef Muller-Brockmann realized that “graphic design - if it was to inform and enlighten without being manipulative - had to be based on objective criteria” (Muller 17). This belief was eventually shared on a larger scale by many of the prominent constructivist designers by 1945. This belief along with the preference for grid systems, sans serif typography, and objective illustration (among other aspects) were preferable eventually resulted in the creation of *Neue Grafik*, a magazine created in an attempt to demonstrate proper modernist and constructivist design ideologies (Muller 34). The accessibility to the magazine made constructive graphic design a global phenomenon in 1958, and soon constructivism was rebranded as Swiss Graphic Design (Hollis 13).

### **Mistrust in modern advertising.**

Now more than ever consumers are wary and easily irked by advertising tactics. Audiences feel constantly bombarded by ads and as if their every move is being watched by corporations attempting to learn their buying habits. In a recent article, Web ARChive (Evans) found that while consumers have never been more advertising-savvy, they have also never been “more distrustful about the intrusive nature of new technology” (Evans). With the increase in availability of consumer data, companies have found it easier than ever to tailor ad experiences to potential buyers but are doing so in a way that is negatively impacting their brands. By over saturating consumer’s

everyday lives with repetitive and uninspired ads, they are risking potential present and future business simply because their approach is wrong. WARC's data found that consumers feel as if "advertising has become ever more inescapable and noisy in their lives creating frustration with the brands in question" (WARC). This feeling of frustration ultimately evolves into distrust and skepticism within the brands themselves, simply because their approach is too aggressive and repetitive.

But how does this apply to SGD? According to Müller-Brockmann, one of the most important parts of SGD is the code of morality that it carries with it. SGD was founded on the principle of objective communication of goods. The design elements used in SGD left little to no room for anything more than the bare essentials needed to communicate the topic to the consumer. The designers who dedicated themselves to commercial design in the style of SGD believed that advertisements should encourage consumers to purchase the goods through direct and objective graphic design. Swiss painter and poster artist Otto Baumberger believed that when "word and image are integrated [...] the result is 'the simplest and most effective type of objective advertising'" (Hollis 31). This sentiment was held by many other Swiss designers including Josef Müller-Brockmann, who believed that any problem posed by advertising as a whole can easily be reconciled through artistic means. It is for these reasons that I believe the reintroduction of SGD to modern advertising design would have a positive impact not only on the perception of advertising design as an art form but also on the trust and interest consumers have in companies. SGD was so dedicated to objective communication that designers often refused to implement their highly sought-after skills on any advertisements that could be potentially misleading or

harmful to consumers (Müller 35). WARC ends their article with a clear and simple statement, “consumer trust has to be earned - continuously.” With the implementation of a design style dedicated to complete transparency and objective communication, loss of consumer trust would be much less of an issue.

## Goals

### **Project assets.**

With the general research of SGD completed and a clear reasoning as to why this thesis fills a gap within the current literature of the subject, the next step was to identify the goals of this project and how to reach them. The overarching goal of this project is to create an accurate style guide for SGD so that designers like myself can use it as a reference guide when designing advertisements in a more artful way. In order to create this guide, however, pieces of original artwork must first be analyzed in order to find commonalities that will serve as the guiding principles. These guiding principles will then be compiled into an easily digestible format and designed in the style of SGD. The next step will be to identify a company that fits within the simple criteria SGD requires of its subjects. The criteria that must be met, as alluded to in both Müller and Hollis' writings, are as follows; the company must not sell potentially harmful goods and the company must be modern and design conscious. Once the company is identified, a rebrand of the company in traditional SGD style will occur. This rebrand may include but is not limited to letterheads, packaging, posters, authorization cards, company website, business cards, and apparel. The final aspect of this project is a compilation of the aspects of the written thesis and the rebrand in a magazine/brand book designed in the style of SGD.

Simply put: the goals of this thesis project are to (1) identify stylistic elements of SGD and create a guide, (2) identify a company that fits the above criteria, (3) rebrand

said company with some of the listed branding materials, and (4) compile these elements into a brand book that reflects the principles listed in the style guide.

**Guidance from contemporary designers.**

While the creation of the SGD style guide will be derived strictly from advertisements created by the designers who curated SGD, inspiration for the modern application of the style will be pulled from current designers. Individuals such as Christopher Holt, Michael Goldberg, and H  l  ne Marian have been sharing their creative processes and designs through social platforms like Instagram and Behance. By pulling inspiration from these designers and applying the style guide created from the original SGD pieces, the goal is to create a project that pays homage to the originators of the style while remaining rooted in the digital design practices.

## **Process**

### **Identifying principles.**

Before the process of rebranding can occur, the elements of traditional SGD must be identified through a visual analysis of original Swiss commercial design. The advertisements that will be analyzed are mainly for purchasable products but will also include posters for events as well since this was one of the most common implementations of SGD. While only one example will be analyzed in the interest of time, examples beyond the one in this section can be found in the appendix.

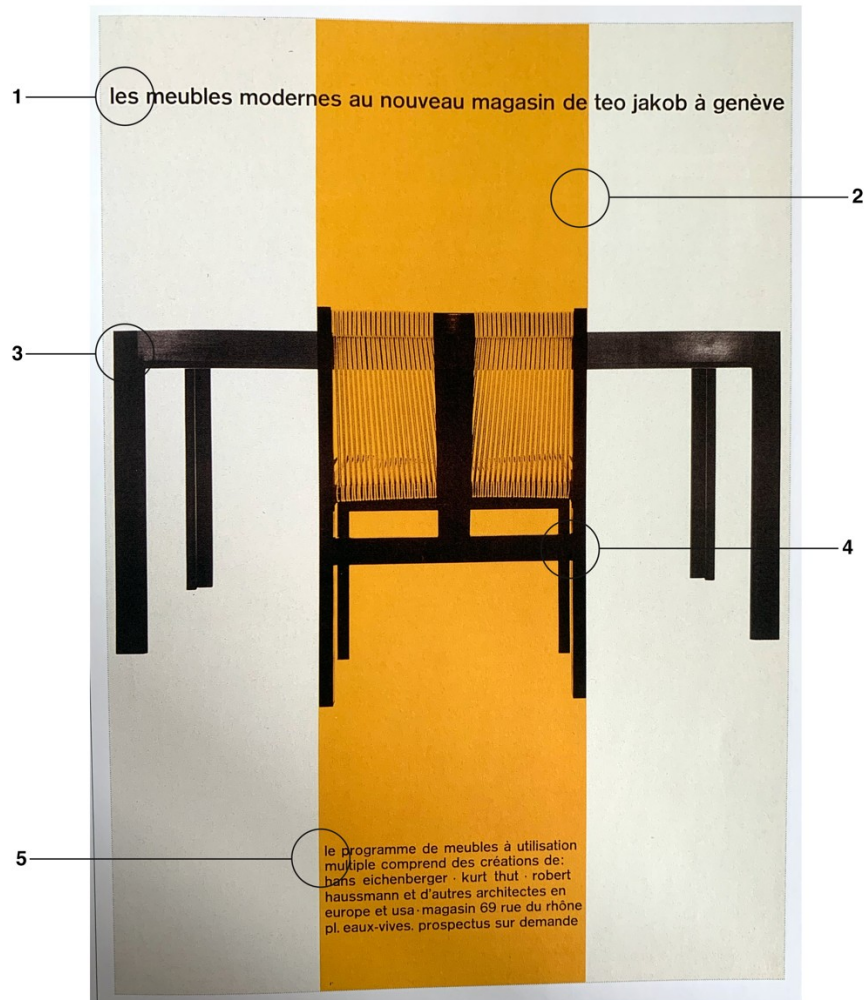


Figure 3: *Modern Furniture at the New Teo Jakob Shop in Geneva*, designed by Alfred Hablützel, 1957.

This is an example of commercial design done in the style of SGD. The numbers listed on the side of the figure are indicative of a specific aspect of SGD and will be discussed below in greater detail. Not every example will have all the same principles applied, so the numbers from here on may not be in chronological order.

### 1. *Sans serif typography.*

One of the most prominent and consistent principles of SGD is the usage of sans serif typography. Favored because of its exclusion of typographical ornaments, sans



serifs were relied upon in order to “increase the sense of urgency” of the message being relayed (Hollis 40). Sans serif typography was seen as functional, objective, and minimal, three ideals which SGD held in high esteem. Serif fonts are defined as typefaces with small lines or strokes that are always attached to the end of a larger stroke in a letter. A sans serif font is a typeface that lacks these extra marks at the end strokes that make up a letter (Serif). For an additional visual reference to the difference between serif and sans serif typography, refer to Figure 4.

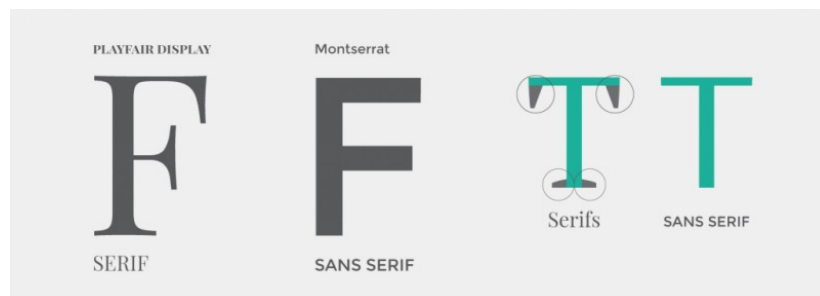


Figure 4: A visual frame of reference for differentiating sans serif and serif typefaces.

## 2. Simple geometric shapes.

The shift from detailed illustration to the use of abstract forms and geometric shapes is another common signifier of SGD. While photography was still commonly used in conjunction with such forms, geometric shapes were often used for their precision and innate objectivity. The square and the circle were heavily implemented within SGD and served functional purposes. The square often used as “a basic division of the design area and as a modular unit” in order to lend to the overall sense of visual order (Hollis 58).

### *3. If not shapes, then photography.*

In the same way that geometric shapes were seen as honest and objective, photography was believed to imply an honest representation of the product being depicted. SGD strayed away from relying on the emotionality of consumers and instead placed importance on the idea that objective representation within their designs would communicate essential information to buyers by demonstrating exactly what was for sale while emphasizing the “quality of workmanship and materials” (Hollis 79).

### *4. Grid systems.*

One of the most important and inseparable aspects of SGD is the invisible grid. Because the country utilized three specific languages (German, French, and Italian), the decision to split pages into three columns was born from a necessity for distinct language sections in advertisements and general literature as well (Hollis 176). While primarily functional, grids were also commonly used in other areas of art and design like architecture. Grid systems served both to organize information and provide structure to artistic practices and anchor the designs to the page. This particular advertisement is split into nine rectangles: three across, three down, a grid system developed by designer Max Bill.

### *5. Informational hierarchy.*

In SGD, the way in which page elements are laid out is imperative to effective communication. Many designers believed that form was the direct outcome of function, and the most important function a design has is to communicate ideas in a legible way. For this reason, information on a page often varied in size based on the importance of

the message (Hollis 238). For example, the most important type should be the largest as to draw consumers in (in this design it is the title of the store), the next most important set of information should be a little smaller so that viewers read the advertisement chronologically. The photo of the product serves as a background and an element of interest to the viewer. By denoting by size, a hierarchy of informational importance is created.

### **Identification of a company.**

With the establishment of five consistent style principles through the analysis of original commercial design, the next step in this process is to identify a company that would work well with the application of SGD. During the research portion of this thesis, there were multiple examples of different products that were advertised using the identified SGD guidelines. One area of industry that showed up consistently was furniture companies. While this repetition seemed somewhat strange at first, the relationship between furniture design and SGD soon became apparent. Switzerland has a vast history of design, not limited to SGD exclusively. Companies such as the Wohnbedarf furniture store were some of the first commercial clients with which SGD was experimented with. Furthermore, the criteria of companies having to be “modern, design-conscious businesses” was easily met by companies whose main product was literally physical design (Müller 28).

With this discovery came the idea that a good company to apply SGD to would be a modern furniture store. After doing some research I came across an online furniture design company called Schoolhouse. Schoolhouse designs and produces lighting, furnishings, and tools for what they describe as “productive living” (Schoolhouse). The

concept of productive living felt very similar to many of the functionalist and SGD ideals and since they are committed to championing authentic, American heirlooms, it seemed like Schoolhouse fit perfectly within the established research. Coupled with the fact that one of their two flagship stores is located in Portland, Oregon, made my decision an easy one. After reviewing their existing brand identity, I knew that they fit within the criteria of being a design-conscious business even beyond the products they sold.

### **The redesign begins.**

#### *1. Searching for inspiration.*

With the identification of SGD principles and the selection of a company having been made, the next step in my creative process was to start designing. But before putting pen to paper, I first had to collect ample inspiration from modern designers and companies that I believed fit within many of the same ideals of SGD. Some examples below demonstrate what I consider to be a modern interpretation of SGD.

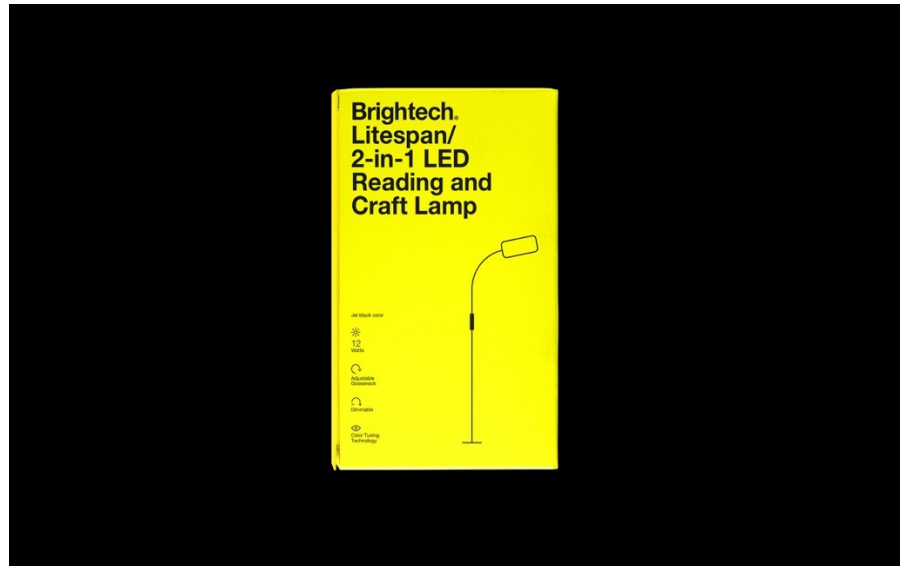


Figure 5: Branding component for Brightech, designed by Mane Tatoulian.



Figure 6: Branding component for 360 Capital, designed by Linda Jukic.

## 2. *Beginning to sketch.*

Now that I had some inspiration and reference points to keep myself grounded in modern design techniques while implementing the rules established in the previous

section, it was time to start sketching the outline of what the brand book would look like.

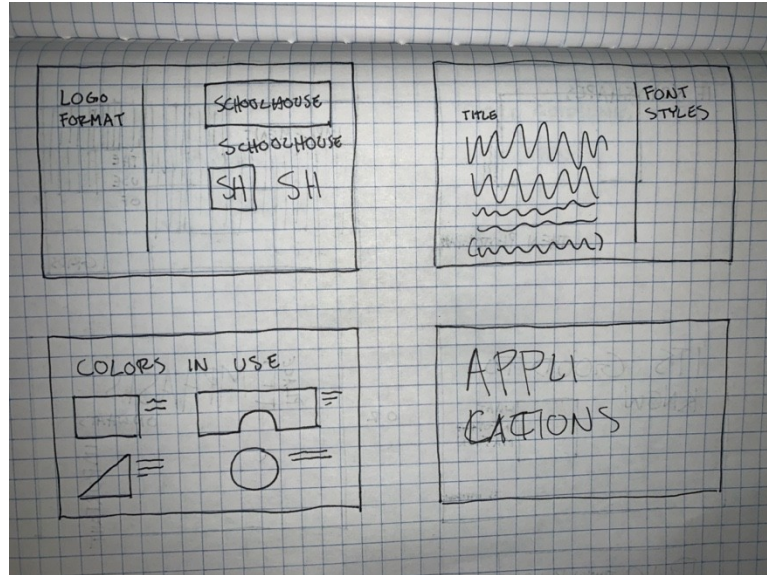


Figure 7: A few sketches from my notebook of general outlines of pages that would later take form in the brand book.

The purpose of this step was to simply get ideas on paper. Using the graphing paper was particularly useful and important to this process since one of the most important rules of SGD is to work on a grid when designing.

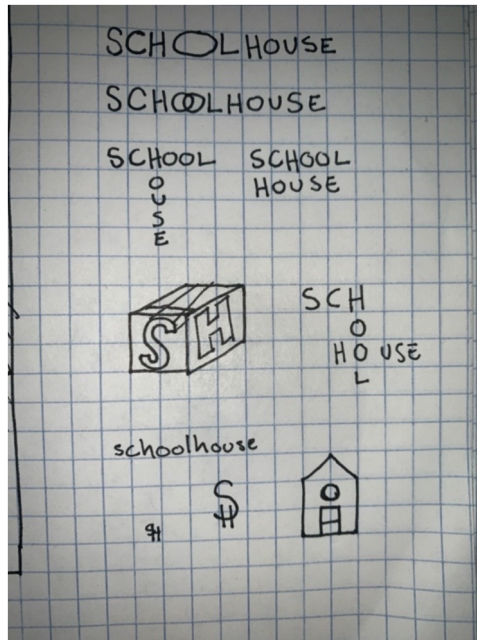


Figure 8: A few sketches of rough logo ideas for Schoolhouse.

### 3. *Transferring to digital.*

Now that I had a rough idea of how I wanted things to be laid out on the page and what some logos may look like, it was time to start using design software to bring the ideas to life. I started with the logo so that I could have a better understanding of what the new brand identity would look like.

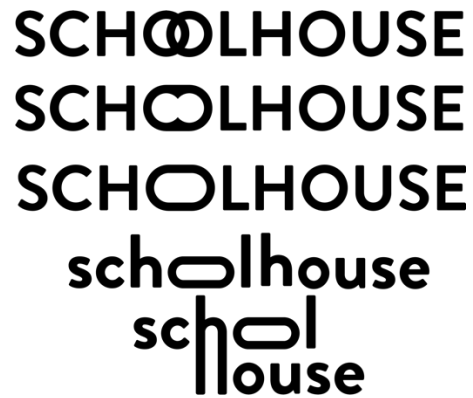


Figure 9: First set of Schoolhouse logo iterations.

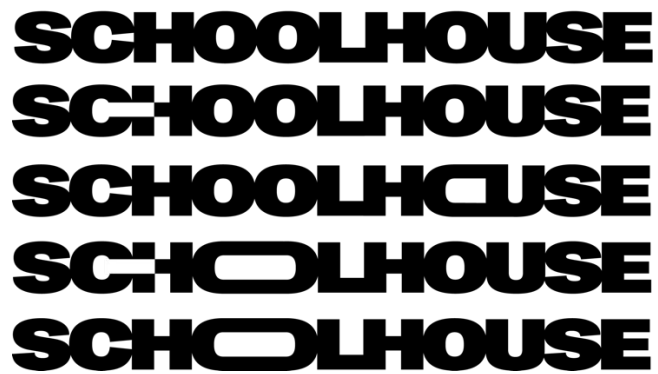


Figure 10: Second set of Schoolhouse logo iterations.

This time using the final font choice for the logo, Right Grotesk.

From here I narrowed the logos down and ultimately decided to go with the last logo in this list. From here I made multiple iterations of the logo, including some simple initial logos. After the logos were completed, I moved on to shapes and colors that would be used within the brand book and on branding materials.



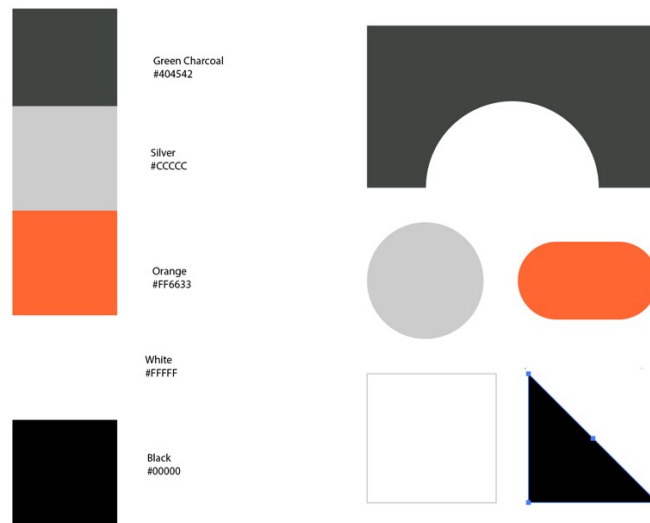


Figure 11: Examples of the final set of geometric shapes and colors that would be used on the branding materials.

I chose these colors with the help of an online service that extracts colors from average tones that appear in an individual’s Instagram page<sup>1</sup>. I inputted Schoolhouse’s Instagram information and was given a large selection of colors. The top two colors were the ones I pulled from that generator, the orange is a color already used on their website, and then simple black and white as base colors. The shapes were created in reference to building blocks. As a kid I had wooden building blocks that I would design houses and sculptures with, and the name “Schoolhouse” brought them to mind. They refer to the functionality of Schoolhouse’s furniture and homewares while still paying homage to the beauty of simplistic design that Schoolhouse champions. At this point, I was ready to start compiling the brand book and designing the materials used.

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<sup>1</sup> colorkuler.com

#### 4. *Poster design.*

Now that the basics of the style guide for Schoolhouse had been completed, it was time to implement them into some advertisements. The below example demonstrates not only how the brand's new style guide comes to life, but how it reflected the SGD style guide that was identified earlier in the paper. More visual examples can be found later on, or the brand manual can be referred to for a complete demonstration.



Figure 12: Original advertisement for Schoolhouse, designed with the original style guide in mind.

This is an original advertisement that was created for Schoolhouse using the original logo and style guide created with SGD rules in mind. The advertisement implements sans serif typography, both geometric shapes and photography, grid design, and informational hierarchy. The reason this advertisement fits within SGD's guidelines goes beyond these categories, however. Not only does it meet the visual requirements previously discussed, but it also naturally fits in with Schoolhouse's design-conscious brand in a way that is natural, communicates their dedication to design, and places their product at the center of consumer attention without feeling overwhelming or malicious.

5. *The brand book.*

Below are a few examples of what a printed brand manual would look like.

While I was unable to compile my designs into a physical book due to COVID-19 restrictions, I did want to demonstrate what my original vision was for this manual. The complete brand manual can be found in PDF form.



Figure 13: Cover of Schoolhouse brand manual.



Figure 14: Example of a two-page spread from the brand manual.



Figure 15: Example of a two-page spread from the brand manual.

## Conclusion

Finding balance on a page is much harder than I was anticipating. While SGD was and remains an attractive style of design to me, this project made me realize that designing from a place of visual simplicity and function is much more difficult than I imagined. Through this entire experience I was constantly tested with checkpoints that frequently made me stumble and wonder if I was making the right decision to turn my thesis into a creative project. When I first completed the critical writing portion, I felt as if I had duped myself into a much more difficult project. The completion of the critical writing should have felt like victory, but only served to remind me that I still had an entire second portion of the thesis to go. However, once I started designing, I started to truly enjoy the process and it was absolutely a labor of love.

While I can only hope that I filled in what I found to be a gap within the existing literature surrounding SGD, I know for sure that this project resulted in something that I am really proud of. The process of doing such in depth research in order to create a simple style guide was something that I had never done before, but ultimately, I believe that it paid off when it came to the actual design work. Not only was the research something new to me but creating a brand manual was also something I had no prior solo experience in beyond a few ventures. While I struggled with documenting my process and putting into words how much of a learning experience this was for me, I hope that the manual speaks for itself.

If there is one thing that I gained from this project it is certainly an immense appreciation for the original designers of this style, and all other styles that were created in a time before the ease digital software provides for the creative process. Without

programs like InDesign and Photoshop, I would have been completely lost on how to create the designs I came up with. SGD started as a style that I found aesthetically pleasing and interesting, but the research I completed and the designs that I made have created a lasting appreciation for the style that will last a long time. Whether I end up in advertising or in another creative field, I hope to implement what I learned through this experience in the hopes of contributing to the artfulness I know advertising can represent.

# Appendix

## Visual inspiration.

**Billig ist es.  
Aber ist es auch gut?**

Das fragten wir 2500 Hausfrauen.  
Und ihre Antworten bestätigten uns:  
Unsere neuen Waschmittel  
sind so gut wie die besten.

Aber wir wollten  
sie noch besser machen.  
Indem wir sie nämlich billiger machten.

Das konnten wir, weil wir  
eine eigene (Co-op) Fabrik haben.  
Die liefert direkt  
an die 3000 (Co-op) Läden.  
So verdient kein Zwischenhändler  
und kein Vertreter an uns.

Nur die Kundin.  
Die dann gleich doppelt profitiert:  
Von der ausgezeichneten Qualität.  
Und vom billigen Preis.

Das Spezialwaschmittel mit Schaumautomatik für jeden Automaten.  
Poudre à laver spéciale, à mousser réglable, pour chaque automate.  
Liscia speciale a schiuma regolata per tutti le lavatrici automatiche.

Teddymat  
spezial für Automaten.  
Mit Schäumautomatik.  
Das heisst:  
So viel Schäumen wie nötig.  
So wenig Schäumen wie möglich.  
Grosspaket Fr. 2,40  
in Co-op Läden  
mit 4 Co-op Punkten.

Zum Vorwissen  
Baby 75, ideal mit Teddymat  
auch für Automaten.  
Grosspaket je Fr. 2,-  
in Co-op Läden  
mit je 3 Co-op Punkten.

Co-op  
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Baby 75  
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Lausanne was  
from Paris. They were less ready to  
practise the Constructive style. But  
there were a few notable exceptions.

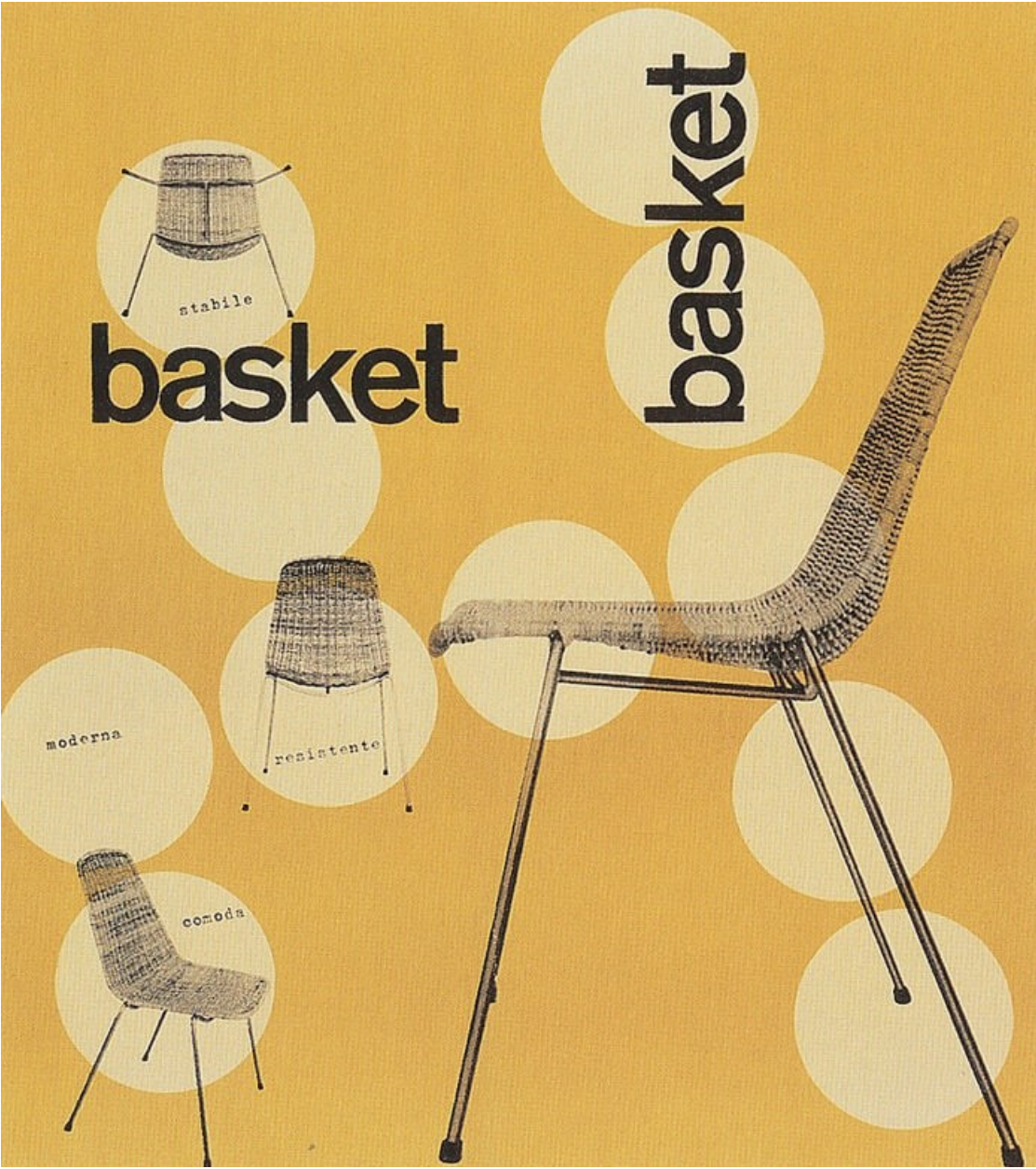
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The conventions of 'Constructive' design are all here: lowercase typography, documentary ('sachlich') photography, and geometry. The square



The base of the horizontal length of wood – on the lower edge of the white band – rests on the base of a square at the top of the poster. Squares, the

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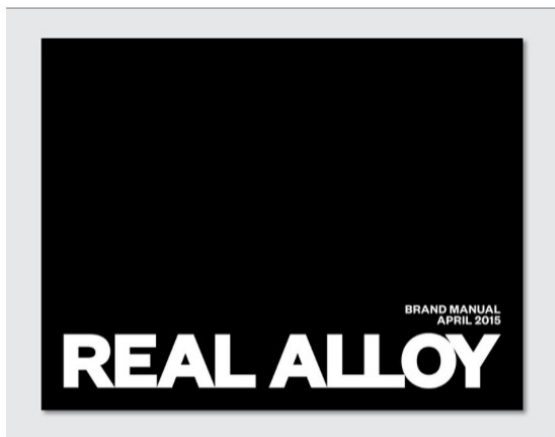
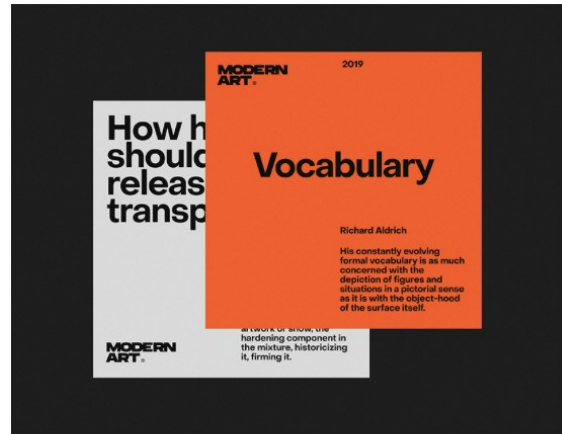
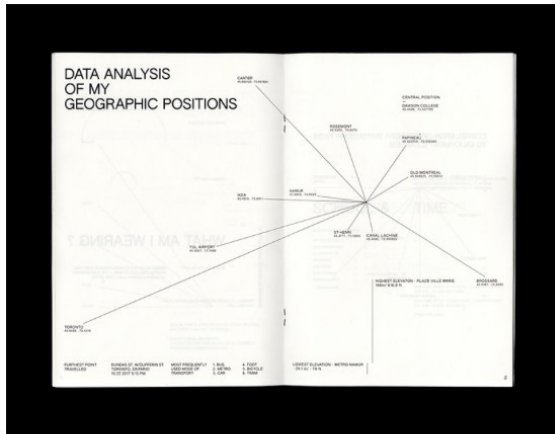


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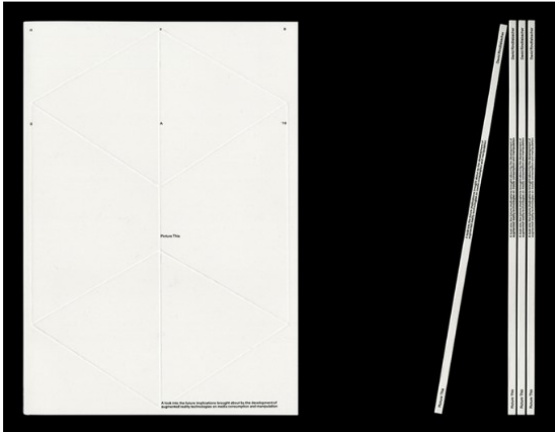


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Aventa<sup>®</sup>  
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Type Fundamentals  
Taught by: John Bresciani  
References from: Joshua Hardisty, (2015), Artnet, MoMA

# International Typographic Style

Learn about some of the masters of Swiss Typography and how their work helped influence what we know as the International Typographic Style.

# Schwarze Kunst?

Schwarz ja, denn diese «Porcelaine noire»-Vasen sind schwarz bereits in der Masse, nicht nur oberflächlich eingefärbt. Kunst ebenfalls ja! Dafür steht eine Goldmedaille. Tapio Wirkkala erhielt für diese Tiefrelief-Vasen auf dem XXIV. Internationalen Wettbewerb für Kunst-Keramik 1966 in Faenza unter mehr als zweitausend Erzeugnissen den «Ersten Preis für Industrial-Design-Erzeugnisse».

*Rosenthal*  
studio-linie



Rosenthal Studio Line Advertisement  
1966

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