Photo / Graphics

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Photo/graphics in French magazines: the possibilities of rotogravure, 1926–1935

The fact that my title refers to technique rather than aesthetics reflects what I take to be a constant: in the case of photography (and, if I might dare to say, representation), technical processes and their development are the mainsprings of innovation and creation. In other words, the technique determines possibilities which are then perceived and translated by operators or others, notably photographers. With regard to photo/graphics, my position is the same: the introduction of photography into graphics systems was to engender new possibilities and reinvigorate the question of graphic design. And this in turn raises another issue: the printing of the photograph, which is to say, its assimilation to both the print and the illustration, with the mass distribution that implies.

I have chosen to look at a period which was particularly rich for the emergence of certain photo/graphic models because we are still experiencing the consequences or possibilities which appeared at that time. During the 1920s – with its proliferation of avant-gardes – it was once again the development of a technical possibility which became a source of innovation in graphic design. The problem was to find a means of printing the photograph so as to preserve all of the tonal qualities and gradations. And the solution was rotogravure, which spread throughout the media at the end of the 1920s.

I will base my remarks on two broad arguments: the first is that rotogravure offered unsuspected, unprecedented possibilities for the photographic illustration of magazines and the second, that the application of these principles radically altered not only the graphic design of photography (the treatment of the photographic image, or several images, within a page), but graphic design in the broad sense, including typography. Moholy-Nagy understood this connection between typography and the (future) mobility of photographic graphic design, moreover: this is what he develops under the name of "typofoto" in a few pages at the end of *Malerei, Fotografie, Film* (Painting, Photography, Film, 1925 and 1927), where he presents a "sketch for a manuscript of a film", *Dynamik der Großstadt* (Dynamic of the Metropolis). (But here, he was limited to the possibilities of halftone printing, in other words, a letterpress process applied to photography.) At the end of the 1920s, the graphic principles applied in the illustrated photography magazines (which were thus specialized in photographic illustration) were to affect the page layout, the typography of the headlines and the text-image balance to such an extent that the page (or double page) and the front and back covers

became full-fledged graphic elements which gave the magazine its "graphic identity" (to use a more recent and therefore anachronistic concept).

How and why did these new possibilities emerge? Here, it is useful to take a brief look at the invention of photography, officially dating from 1839, and its constituent features, which allow us to distinguish the Daguerreotype/unique piece from the negative-positive process (resulting from William Henry Fox Talbot's experiments) permitting the printing of multiple images from a matrix (the negative). With Daguerreotype and negative alike (and in the line of Nicéphore Niépce's research), there was an immediate intention to transform the photographic matrix – regardless of its nature – into a printing matrix, comparable to an etching plate, a woodcut, a lithographic plate or a letterpress block. Two objectives, which were Utopian at the time, guided these efforts: obtaining permanent prints (which would not be subject to the instability of silver-based chemical substances) and integrating the photograph directly into press illustration without resorting to manual reproductions. Both were to be achieved through "photoengraving", the making of a photographic matrix for mechanical impression. Niépce de Saint-Victor, Talbot, Charles Nègre, Alphonse Poitevin and many others tried their hand at it in the 1850s but it was only in the 1890s that the technical solutions proposed became industrially viable, in other words, adapted to the printing of a daily newspaper, with its imperatives of speed, quantity and quality. At that time, halftone held sway as the only "photomechanical" process capable of meeting the needs of the daily or weekly press. In technical terms, the photographic print is used to produce a metal block of the same thickness and structure as the block of type (forming one column of text). The challenge of photoengraving *always* consists of transforming the tonal gradations of the photograph into a group of discrete elements with varying degrees of proximity and regularity; in the case of halftone, the surface of the photograph is translated into equidistant dots (by means of a screen whose resolution is determined by the number of "lines per inch", LPI). The size of the resulting dots varies with the intensity of the given tone (very large and contiguous for black, very small for white); in fact, they constitute the top of small cones etched in "relief" on a metal plate, like letterpress characters, to receive the printing ink. In order to include photographs in a page (such as the first page of the daily newspaper *L'Excelsior*, which made a speciality of its photo spreads), it was necessary to have letterpress blocks with images in halftone which could be inserted into the typographic "mould". The images were thus rectangular and the page layout was determined by the arrangement of the columns, which left little room for invention. The fact that the photograph arrived "directly" onto the newspaper page (without being transcribed manually into a line engraving, as was previously the case) nonetheless constituted a major advance. Magazines which had the time (and resources) to indulge in extravagances could offer "in-text" photographs where the original rectangle was opaqued or faded out (cf. the *Bulletin du Photo-Club de Paris* in the 1890s). Each issue of *American Illustrated* Magazine (which banked on exclusively photographic illustration) included not only the in-text pictures but a full page of photographs carefully laid out with oval or circular cut-outs and overlapping insets. Which amounted, in short, to creating a photomontage from prints which had been cut up and outlined before the whole was made into a halftone plate or "stereotype".[1]

1. In French printing jargon, the stereotype is also called a *cliché*, like the typographic equivalent ("a metal plate in relief which serves to print a large number of copies of a typographic composition, a drawing or a woodcut" [*Trésor de la langue française*, http://atilf.fr]). By extension, the photographic negative also came to be referred to as a "cliché", and subsequently, the simplicity and gratuitous nature of amateur photography led, as in the case of the stereotype, to the figurative meaning of banality, which soon made its way into English as well.

But at the end of the nineteenth century, there was already another form of photoengraving – in intaglio rather than relief – which had not yet been perfected industrially: photogravure (called *héliogravure* in French, where the term *photogravure* refers generically to any photoengraving process). By the 1890s, the advances in this process for "flat" (i.e., non rotary) printing were to provide excellent photographic inserts for quality publications; it served, for example, to print most of the plates for Alfred Stieglitz's *Camera Work* (1903-1917). Unlike the halftone screening process, this form of photogravure used a resinous powder dusted over the plate to be etched and melted down to form a resist. But it was the adaptation of photogravure to the rotary presses in the early twentieth century which made it more operational for the printing industry; by around 1910, it was increasingly used for the printing of weekly magazines under the name of *rotogravure*. The photoengraving process proper to rotogravure (which is different from that of the photogravure plate) would be determinant for the rise of this photomechanical printing process which was competing with halftone. The breaking up of the photographic surface into discrete elements is produced by small squares juxtaposed on a regular grid (denser than that of the halftone process); these squares are engraved into the metal (copper) surface of the rotary cylinder with ferric chloride. The tonal density of each resulting cell depends not on its size, which remains invariable, but on its depth, because of the amount of ink retained. This feature is what gives the rendering of the tonal gradations in photogravure all its subtlety, because of the slight variations in the density of the ink (which is a bit transparent, moreover, and often coloured, mainly in brown, purplish blue or dark green). In halftone, grey is rendered through the optical mixing of the screened dots seen at a distance, while in photogravure, it is the density of the ink which determines the tonal variations. And while halftone only uses opaque black, photogravure has a range of tones which constitute an advantage for reproducing photography.

But the main innovation of rotogravure, which had a decisive impact on graphic design, was the transparent matrix, which also served as the final layout of each page. This means that the page was designed on the basis of photography rather than typography. The images chosen were first transferred as positives, in the desired size, onto clear celluloid, and retouched (without being screened); they could then be cut up at will and mounted on a transparent surface. The text, composed on cellophane (typon) was subject to the same treatment, which could in fact modify the sacrosanct justified columns; similarly, the captions and headlines, initially composed on cellophane, were soon drawn partly or totally in ink, with great inventiveness.
In this way, the entire form (one side of a signature) could be "mounted" on the glass flat, page after page, with scissors and gummed paper, and the photographic transparencies could still be reduced or enlarged if necessary.
The new tool which replaced the layout table of earlier processes is a light table, which simply did not exist earlier in what was to become a graphic design studio (for the sizing and retouching of the photos, the mock-up and the page layouts), located within the printing works, close to the rotary presses. The transparent mechanical was screened onto a sensitive surface which then served for the direct engraving of the cylinder. All the elements of the page (texts, headlines, images) were subject to the same screening (in fact nearly invisible). We can see right away that these potentialities were to give rise to new professions in graphic design: for the initial choice of the subjects treated, the selection of the photographs, the development of a layout specific to each page or article, the creation of

headlines and the making of the montage (and soon after, the production of "photomontages" from yet other photographs).[2]

Chronologically, the first (weekly) photography magazines – in France at least – appeared from 1914 on to report on the war: *J'ai vu* (I saw), *Le Miroir* (The mirror). They already made use of rotogravure's new possibilities: a large photo on the front cover (and the back cover as well), a hand-drawn headline, all-over montages of photos (but without visual acrobatics, given the seriousness of the subject) and a double-page photo in the centre spread. The choice of rotogravure was motivated by the desire to show a great number of photographs (it is true that little could be said in writing because of military censorship), but strangely enough, this editorial experience tied to the war did not get going again after 1918. It was only in 1926 that a "rotogravure" weekly appeared, *Match L'Intran*, the sports supplement of the daily *L'Intransigeant* (known as *L'Intran*). In fact, the shift to rotogravure was not simple: quite different from halftone, it required the introduction of special presses and studios, with their specific machines which took up more space than the rotary letterpresses, and a new technological conception (the paper, in rolls, first had to be dampened and then dried).[3] It was owing to this technological transformation than *L'Intran* was to launch two weeklies illustrated with photographs, one devoted to sports, *Match L'Intran* (first issue 9 November 1926) and the other to film, *Pour vous* (For you, first issue 22 November 1928).[4]

Before turning to my main focus, namely the innovations of *VU* (founded in 1928), I would like to dwell a moment on *Match L'Intran* in order to correct two earlier mistakes (my own). My research on *VU* and the photo-illustrated press goes back to the end of the 1980s.[5] On the basis of secondary sources which I could not verify at the time, I, like others, believed that *VU* had as its model the *Berliner Illustrirte Zeitung*.[6] But several years ago, when I finally found issues of the *BIZ*, I was able to establish firsthand that this was not the case: *VU* not only used many more photographs but was considerably more advanced than the *BIZ*, which was printed in halftone rather than photogravure and thus could not benefit from the latter's advantages in terms of graphic design. Still more recently, I discovered *Match L'Intran*, whose graphic innovations – which had never been noticed before – preceded those of *VU* by eighteen months.[7] To give just a quick overview:
The title, first of all, which does not correspond to a type font, was clearly drawn for the occasion, in three different styles of lettering (*Match/l'intran/le plus grand hebdomadaire sportif*; two additional kinds of letters were used for the lines containing the issue number and date and the magazine's administrative address).

2. The most precise indications on the printing techniques of the 1930s are available in Georges Degaast and Georges Frot, *Les Industries Graphiques. Conférences d'Enseignement Technique du Livre*. Paris: Privately printed, 1934.
3. The machines were "already" of German manufacture. The major event which was to launch this new printing market, the Pressa exhibition-fair, took place in Cologne from May to October 1928. The French illustrated weekly *VU* had a stand there.
4. See Françoise Denoyelle, *La Lumière de Paris*, vol. I: *Le Marché de la Photographie, 1919-1939*, and vol. II: *Les Usages de la Photographie* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1997), esp. vol. II, p. 97 ff.
5. For the exhibition "Face à l'histoire" (In face of history, presented at the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris from 19 December 1996 to 7 April 1997), I curated a "photography" section which included some 400 covers and double-page spreads of photo-illustrated magazines constituting a visual history of the period from 1933 to 1970.
6. This idea came notably from one of the rare reference books on the subject, Tim N. Gidal, *Modern Photojournalism. Origin and Evolution, 1910-1933*. New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1973.
7. A complete collection of *Match L'Intran* which I located has now been acquired by the Musée Nicéphore Niépce in Chalon-sur-Saône. The study which I have now completed on this publication, and which I have drawn on for the present article, will be available on the museum's website www.museeniepce.com.

The full-page cover photo (within a margin) was soon devoted to a portrait of an athlete; by blocking out the upper part of the image, it was made to spill over the title. A full-page photomontage was introduced with the first issue (it was initially placed on page 12, but subsequently moved up to page 2). These photomontages are the most surprising feature of *Match L'Intran* because of their great complexity. They are anything but trial runs of a format which was not yet defined and seem to make their appearance without shocking readers. They deal with a theme (related to sports) and constitute a full-page "graphic composition" opening the issue. These photomontages were still often limited to unified accumulations/juxtapositions of documents, but they soon attained a graphic maturity through variations in the relative sizes of certain details or the featuring of a central inset. We might take a look, for example, at the back cover of issue 27 (10 May 1927), a photomontage which, against the background of a soccer field, superimposes a full-frame ball containing one scene from a match. Another feature of photo/graphics is systematically applied on page 7: the overlay of columns of text on transparent sheets over the entire page, and a full figure or cut-out portrait photo (sometimes several portraits of athletes). In addition, there is the play on colours specific to the particular ink of rotogravure: the first issues experimented successively with green, purple, sepia and black (generally reduced to dark brown in later issues).

Match L'Intran constitutes a precedent clearly suited to the exclusive focus on sports, since this thematic unity kept the reader from being overwhelmed by ambiguous intentions. It is impossible that *VU*'s founders were not aware of these first graphic achievements and would not have taken into account their acceptance by a mass readership (something which *VU* never managed to reach, moreover). The first issue of *VU* came out on 21 March 1928, under the direction of Lucien Vogel. His ambition was to make it a photographic news magazine, paralleling the movie newsreels. The promise of graphic innovation was asserted from the outset with the commissioning of a logo from the designer Cassandre (who had made a name for himself in 1925 with his famous poster for *L'Intran*). Vogel was also close to the Deberny-Peignot font foundry (he was a member of the editorial committee of their magazine, *Arts et Métiers graphiques*, founded in 1927). For the photographic side of *VU*, he turned to the youngest of the modernists, including André Kertész, Germaine Krull, Eli Lotar and occasionally Man Ray; the Studio Dorland handled advertising and Marc Réal created the photomontages.

VU's photo/graphic innovations were based on the following graphic concept: each page of a given article (most often a double-page) constituted a graphic unit within which the photographs, collected in advance to deal with a given subject, were arranged in a constantly changing but carefully adapted way (see for example the page "L'auto dans l'oeil du phare" (The automobile in the headlight's eye), no. 29, 3 October 1928), featuring five photos of those protruding chrome headlights which gave rise to so many photographic variations.) Single and double pages are treated as *montages* of photos, with white spaces, tinted insets of text and captions, and headlines: "L'ennui des routes" (Boredom on the roads), by Marcel Ichac (no. 185, 1931); "Gratte-ciel" (Skyscraper, no. 196, 1931); "Cils" (Eyelashes, no. 204, 1932); "Skis" (no. 208, 1932), "L'ivresse du movement" (The exhilaration of movement, no. 484, 1937). We can obviously invoke Moholy-Nagy's *Dynamic of the Metropolis*, but beyond the fact that he did not have the possibilities of rotogravure at his disposal, the shooting script he proposes leaves much less latitude than the reading of a double page

magazine spread. The open-ended possibilities of montage for page layout are played out in the organisation, positioning and visual association of predominantly photographic elements. In its ample use of white space, this photomontage invented for the press parallels the much denser photomontage coming from Dada.

But these two forms of montage seem foreign to one other, in origins and intentions (press and protest art) alike. For the exhibition "Regarder *VU*" (Looking at *VU*), my co-curator Cédric de Veigy and I singled out four kinds of composition: formal, dynamic, comparative and "sequential glances".[8] In this last case, which is the most subtle, the reader's eye is guided over the ordered space, from one image to another, by the structure of the photographs and, often, by the glances within them, as in "Cils" and "Le cercle enchanté" (The enchanted circle, no. 297, 1933). I would also emphasise the innovative design of the headlines, which no longer go unnoticed but rival each other in originality and humour because they are now left to the free interpretation of anonymous layout artists, without the constraints of pre-existing fonts. Their formal inventiveness (overlapping with the photographs, black-white reversal) has no equivalent in the advertising or poster art of the period. The headline "Les travailleurs du mégot" (The cigarette butt workers, no. 380, 1935), for example, is constructed from a cigarette and a match, with the images arranged in function of the direction of the puffs of smoke.

These graphic possibilities gave rise to a discourse emerging from the way the images, in association with the texts and headlines, were connected or opposed to one another through overlapping, inserts, and even colour effects (certain issues were printed in two colours, the usual blackish brown and dark green). It is clear that at the launching of the magazine, everyone was struck by its unprecedented vitality. But within a few years, the 20 weekly pages (subsequently 32) had become a constraint and around 1934, the agitation often felt in leafing from one page to another settled down, for lack of time, and probably for lack of desire and ideas as well (the desire and ideas linked to rotogravure were not to re-emerge, moreover, when the postwar magazines went over to four-colour halftone, which did not offer the same graphic possibilities).[9]

This way of handling graphic and photo/graphic montage was not only applied to the subjects already indicated, which seem to have been specifically chosen for their visual potentialities, quite apart from any newsworthiness. The freedom from typographic constraints also had an impact on the reportage and all forms of account or narrative, which now relied more on the images than on the text. Indeed, *VU* gave rise to the "photographic reportage" in the sense of the modern photojournalism which Robert Capa would exemplify during the Spanish Civil War, but which was born in a time of peace with, for example, Kertész's reportages at the Soligny-la-Trappe abbey (no. 109, 16 April 1930), that of Germaine Krull on vagabonds in Paris (no. 31, 17 October 1928) and that of Eli Lotar at the Asnières Institute for Deaf Mutes (no. 6, 25 April 1928). Once the topic had been defined by the editors and the photographer chosen and sent on the scene, the images he or she brought back were selected. The layout was determinant for bringing out the main ideas at first reading (a superficial

8. The exhibition took place at the Maison Européenne de la Photographie, Paris, from 2 November 2006 to 25 February 2007.

9. The reactions of Robert Delpire and Peter Knapp, two leading figures of photo/graphic design in the second half of the twentieth century, confirm my feeling that the innovative lesson of *VU* and other 1930s magazines disappeared after the war to make way for a new culture, but also to exploit other technical possibilities of graphic design.

one, that of the images). In the extreme, the narration had practically no text at all: this is case with "Chagrin d'amour" (Pain of love, no. 365, 13 March 1935), where each of the ten pictures from Rémy Duval's "photographic poem" is accompanied by a single word. The layout, meanwhile, was predetermined by the photographer and the conception of each image, which was in itself a transposition of feelings into visual form.

Photomontage, in the historic sense of the term (that of the early 1920s), made its first appearance in *VU* in 1930. It took the form of an independent graphic unit, composed mainly or exclusively of autonomous photographic fragments placed together in such a way as to synthesise a whole whose meaning is graphic – in other words, apprehended through visual analysis. We find, for example, the modern woman associated with Venus in the same Botticellian shell, the multiple heads of presidential candidates seeking to take their place on an anonymous body, or the "triumph of woman" in two colours (brown and blue) from elements provided by André Kertész (*Le Triomphe de la femme* (The triumph of woman), anonymous photomontage, no. 104, 12 March 1930). But *VU* made only limited use of these single- or double-page photomontages. Rather, it was when the photomontage reached the cover (with the arrival of Alexandre Libermann at the end of 1932) that it became one of the magazine's graphic mainstays and a "political" component. This photomontage took up again with its anarchist or Bolshevist origins (Dada, Raoul Hausmann, Hannah Höch, John Heartfield, German or Russian Constructivism, Moholy-Nagy, Alexander Rodtchenko, El Lissitzky, etc.). Through the association of two or three photo fragments and a few words, it denounced a political situation, spoke of the society's anxieties or attacked the social system or the excesses of militarism. To cite a final example of these exercises in graphic effectiveness created by *VU*: the special issue "Hitler arme" (Hitler is arming), with a very simple photomontage on the cover (a swastika, a receding line of military helmets, the title in "Gothic" type). This stylised scheme is carried over to the inside pages, with the repetition of the title "Hitler is arming" in the same font, and photos in a strict composition which subverts – and thus denounces – the propaganda images supplied by the German sources.

In the end, *VU* drew on a single graphic constant over twelve years and nearly seven hundred issues: Cassandre's logo, which remained graphically unscathed through all the photographic and graphic transformations. Placed in the upper left corner of the cover, it was sometimes shifted to the right or the centre (in general repeated on the back cover). It was always two-tone, although the colour might change (coloured in blue, no. 98, 29 January 1930; in pink, no. 197, Christmas, 23 December 1931) or become transparent (no. 252, 11 January 1933) and lend itself to a few sight gags, like the military column of the photomontage "VU en Allemagne" (VU in Germany, no. 319, 25 April 1934) marching into the distance between the V and the U.[10] All of that would not have been possible (or only at much greater cost) without the introduction, for the rotogravure process, of the photographic print on celluloid, the light table and the matrix/paste-up on transparent film which reversed the principles of typographic layout. The photographic magazines of the 1926-1935 period attest to the determinant role of photo/graphic design in the reception of the magazine page as a visual and textual whole.

Translated from French by Miriam Rosen

[10.] The name *VU* ("seen") also lent itself to verbal puns reinforcing the idea of visual, eye-witness news, as with this title: *VU* in Germany/Seen in Germany *(trans. note)*.

Roxane Jubert

Typophoto. A major shift in visual communication

Neither curiosity nor economic considerations alone but a deep human interest in what happens in the world have brought about the enormous expansion of the news-service: typography, the film and the radio. […] The printer's work is part of the foundation on which the new world will be built. […] One man invents printing with movable type, another photography, a third screen-printing and stereotype […]. Tomorrow we shall be able to look into the heart of our fellow-man.[1]
László Moholy-Nagy, 1925

Typography is visual communication. […] The modern way of seeing, educated by urban civilization and by the spectacle of contemporary life […] is characterized by heightened perceptiveness.[2]
Karel Teige, 1927

We today have recognized photography as an essential typographic tool of the present. [We] see in photography exactly the factor that distinguishes our typography from everything that went before.[3]
Jan Tschichold, 1928

Our everyday visual environment teems with typophotographic images. Born of the marriage of two media – photography and typography – these composite representations are omnipresent in print, the contemporary urban setting and digital space, diffused by magazines, books, posters, flyers, banners, screens of all kinds, catalogues, brochures, postage stamps and exhibitions. First operational in the closing decades of the nineteenth century,[4] when photomechanical printing successfully combined the two techniques, this major form of visual communication continues to

1. László Moholy-Nagy, "Typophoto", *Painting, Photography, Film* [Bauhausbücher 8, 1925]. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1969, p. 38. Reprinted in Michael Bierut, Jessica Helfand, Steven Heller and Rick Poynor (eds.), *Looking Closer* 3. New York: Allworth Press, 1999, p. 24.
2. Karel Teige, "Modern Typography" (Moderní Typo, 1927), in Eric Dluhosch and Rostislav Švácha (eds.), *Karel Teige, 1900-1951: L'Enfant Terrible of the Czech Modernist Avant-Garde*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1999, p. 100.
3. Jan Tschichold, *The New Typography: A Handbook for Modern Designers*, intr. Robin Kinross. Berkeley/Los Angeles/London: University of California Press, 1995, p. 92. (First Edition: *Die Neue Typographie. Ein Handbuch für Zeitgemäss Schaffende*. Berlin: Verlag des Bildungsverbandes der Deutschen Buchdrucker, 1928).
4. "The press was unable to adapt photography for use with columns of type before the end of the nineteenth century. […] With the advent of *half-tone* engraving, the press set out definitively on the direct (that is, mechanized) reproduction of photographs. In France, *Le Monde Illustré* published the first photomechanical reproduction in half-tone, ruled-screen zincogravure [in] 1877. [In] 1886 *Le Journal Illustré* […] celebrated the hundredth birthday of the chemist Chevreul by publishing an interview with him carried out by Nadar and illustrated with twelve photographs." Pierre Albert and Gilbert Feyel, "Photography and the Media", Michel Frizot (ed.), *A New History of Photography*. Cologne: Könemann, 1998, pp. 359, 361, 362.

flower in the early years of the third millennium, in the most varied fields and media: the plastic arts, interactive creations, banner tarpaulins, textile design, projections, etc. "What is typophoto? […] *Typophoto is the visually most exact rendering of communication*. Every period has its own optical focus. Our age: that of the film; the electric sign, simultaneity of sensorily perceptible events. […] Gutenberg's typography, which has endured almost to our own day, moves exclusively in the linear dimension. The intervention of the photographic process has extended it to a new dimensionality [This] was done by the illustrated papers, posters and by display printing. […] Only quite recently has there been typographic work which uses the contrast of typographic material […] in an attempt to establish a correspondence with modern life. […] The form of these new typographic works will be quite different typographically, optically and synoptically […]. The attempt is now being made to incorporate [typography] creatively into the contents."[5] Thus Moholy-Nagy in a book published by the Bauhaus in 1925 and credited with the first use of the "typophoto" neologism.[6] At the time graphic design was undergoing profound changes throughout Europe, fuelled by movements like Futurism, Dada, Constructivism, photomontage and collage. Sharing the resources of the New Vision and the New Photography, graphics fused them with the radicality of the typographic concepts of the time. This visual recasting was immediately named "New Typography" – in 1923, in another Bauhaus book[7] – and subsequently received other designations including "Elementary Typography", the title of a manifesto brought out in 1925 by a group including Tschichold, Bayer, El Lissitzky, Moholy-Nagy, and Schwitters.[8] Surfing a wave of enthusiasm for communication, the new approach was fundamentally transnational in character: the Czech Karel Teige provided his own summary in "Modern Typography" in 1927, and the following year saw publication of Tschichold's key book *Die Neue Typographie* (The New Typography), which remains a touchstone in its field.[9]

Visual Stimulation

Typophotography as it emerged in the early 1920s was closely tied to Constructivism, Productivism, the Bauhaus and Functionalism, and had a decidedly internationalist perspective. It permeated the work of the creatively versatile – artists, designers, photographers, writers, researchers, theoreticians, teachers – as an element of their concerns and multiple activities, with some of them wildly enthusiastic about the extraordinary new prospects it opened up in the visual field. This was a period of hybridization, as the terms applied to it attest: *typomontage, photo + lettering, typophotography, polygraphy, photo-slogan-montage, foto-auge* [eye and photo], etc. In just a few years it spread to the USSR with Gustav Klutsis and Rodchenko; Holland with Piet Zwart and Paul Schuitema; Germany with the Hungarian Moholy-Nagy and Herbert Bayer; Czechoslovakia with Karel Teige and Ladislav Sutnar; the United States with the Russian Alexey Brodovitch – and the list is far from exhaustive. In 1930

5. László Moholy-Nagy, "Typophoto" (1925), *op. cit.*, p. 39. Reprinted in Bierut *et al.*, *op. cit.*, p. 25.
6. The term "typophoto" appears in at least two 1925 publications: the Bauhaus's *Malerei, Fotografie, Film* (Painting, Photography, Film) and "Elementare Typographie" (see note 8).
7. See note 38. In this context the term "new typography" may be earlier.
8. This was a special number of the review *Typographische Mitteilungen* in 1925, titled "Elementare Typographie", with a print run of close to 30,000 (according to Tschichold in 1930) and republished as *Elementare Typographie. Sonderheft der Typographischen Mitteilungen*. Mayence: Hermann Schmidt, 1986. In it Moholy-Nagy uses the German term "Typophoto" in an article headed "TYPOGRAPHIE-PHOTOGRAPHIE. TYPO-PHOTO". Widely circulated, this publication drew heavy critical fire.
9. See Robin Kinross's introduction to the English-language version (*The New Typography, op. cit.*).

the great art director Mehemed Fehmy Agha summed up the modernist vision of the time in "What makes a magazine 'modern'?": "The Vagabond theories, originated by the Spanish in France and exported to Germany via Russia, arrived back in France via Holland and Switzerland, only to settle down in Dessau and be taught to Japanese students by Hungarian professors."[10]

Combined in a host of different ways, typography and photography loomed large as active components of a graphics on the road to regeneration. Typophotography unleashed its vitality and visual power on all fronts: advertising, posters for cultural events, book design, artistic experimentation, corporate promotion, exhibition design,[11] political propaganda, sociopolitical contestation,[12] ad criticism of the media and their rhetoric… The new medium displayed all its potential, efficacy and power in a range from the individual – and sometimes unfinished – work of art to mass-circulation printed material; and while it enthralled with its originality, it was also augmenting the considerable impact graphics had been enjoying since the second half of the nineteenth century. Down the decades strollers, observers, artists, writers and critics all testify to a striking modification of the everyday landscape.[13] Driven by the Industrial Revolution and mass production, brightly coloured posters, enormous advertising hoardings, enamel plaques, illustrated magazines and dailies, press advertisements, signs and varieties of fonts made endless bids for visual attention.

Enthusiasm mounted in the interwar years. Among the responsive artists, designers and writers was Fernand Léger: "Through the open window the violently coloured wall opposite comes into your home. Enormous letters and figures four metres tall are projected into the apartment. Colour […] is going to dominate everyday life. […] We are quite simply headed towards the rapid evolution of an externalised plastic existence […]. The world is chasing intensity. Speed is the law of today. It dominates and defrauds us […]. We live in a magnificently dangerous time in which people are harassed from all directions."[14] Focusing more on the visual/technical aspect, El Lissitzky was of the same opinion: "The traditional book was torn into separate pages, enlarged a hundred-fold, colored for greater intensity, and brought into the street as a poster. […] The most important aspect is that the production style for word and illustration is subject to one and the same process – to the collotype, to photography. Up to the present there has been no kind of representation as completely comprehensible to all people as photography. So we are faced with a book-form in which representation is primary and the alphabet secondary."[15] French writer Blaise Cendrars was in raptures over advertising in various texts, whereas others were scathingly critical of it. Moholy-Nagy, in the same text as his definition of typophoto, notes that "Illustrated books, newspapers, magazines are printed in millions. […]

10. "What makes a magazine 'modern'?", *Advertising Arts*. New York, 1930, reprinted in Bierut *et al., op. cit.,* p. 54.
11. Note in particular the visual impact of the work of El Lissitzky, in which typography and photography were given proportions in harmony with the area and volume of the exhibition space (Cologne, 1928; Dresden, 1930).
12. See especially the work of John Heartfield, disseminated on a massive scale.
13. By the late nineteenth century observers of the "illustrated poster" and the "artistic poster" were noting the medium's new punch. The poster was "striking", "simple", "effective" and "radiant"; it "glowed", it was "in full flower", it was a "shifting, ephemeral painting demanded by an age in love with popularisation and eager for change."
14. Fernand Léger, *Functions of Painting*, tr. Alexandra Anderson. New York: Viking, 1973. (*This translation by John Tittensor.*)
15. El Lissitzky, "Our Book" (1926-1927), in Bierut *et al., op. cit.,* pp. 28–29.

The typophoto governs the new tempo of the new visual literature."[16] And Tschichold went further in *The New Typography* in 1928: "Modern man has to absorb every day a mass of printed matter which, whether he has asked for it or not, is delivered through his letter-box or confronts him everywhere out of doors."[17] Both made appeals for visual clarity, while the Stenberg brothers, creators of several hundred Soviet film posters, stressed their primary imperative in terms of contemporary graphics: "The poster has to be striking, you might even say jaw-dropping […] We do our utmost to halt the hurried passer-by."[18]

A new equilibrium

The mid-1920s were a high point in the evolution of graphic design, with typophoto vying with other techniques in fields up to and including the poster: associating one medium with another, it produced a third force out of their interaction. Its composite, integrative character made it ideal for montage, collage, construction, recycling, appropriation and other ploys. Words set in type or drawn to look like typeface were combined with innovative photographs – sometimes superposed negatives or overprints – or reproductions cut out of printed material. Manual additions could be made as desired. Offering virtually limitless possibilities, the process left room for all sorts of notions of the text/image relationship, with mutual enrichment often winning out over subordination of one to the other.[19] Raoul Hausmann's self-portrait *ABCD* (1923–1924) bears clear witness to this equipoise, right down to its unconcealed appetite for alphabetical fragments in the raw state.

According to different points of view, image and text – and perhaps other components – dialogue in various ways. Photomontage involves the amalgamation of heterogeneous materials including typography and text. Klutsis even saw a connection with agit-prop: "You mustn't think that photomontage is no more than an expressive arranging of photos. It always includes a political slogan, colour and purely graphic elements."[20] The typographers deliberately reversed the standard way of seeing things. According to Tschichold, "In today's sight-ruled world, the exact image – the photograph – is one of the elementary resources of the new typography."[21] Moholy-Nagy himself saw things in the same light: "Photography is highly effective when used as typographical material. […] It can be confidently stated that the future of typographic methods lies with the photo-mechanical processes."[22] What more conciliatory sign than his drafts for covers for the cultural review *Broom*, comprising photograms made mainly with cut-out letters, and notably with the twin O's of the title word suggesting two camera lenses? Another Moholy-Nagy sketch for *Broom*, however, settles for overlapping letters that drench the space in plays of light and give an impression of depth – of a high-angle view, even – via the organisation of elements

16. László Moholy-Nagy, "Typophoto" (1925), *op. cit.,* pp. 38, 40. Reprinted in Bierut *et al., op. cit.,* pp. 24, 26.
17. Jan Tschichold, *The New Typography, op. cit.,* p. 64.
18. Georgii and Vladimir Stenberg, cited in Eléna Barkhatova, *Russian Constructivist Posters.* New York: Random House, 1992. (*This translation by John Tittensor.*)
19. While Moholy-Nagy uses the composite word "typophoto" in "Elementare Typographie", Karel Teige reverses the order in his "Phototypography: The Use of Photography in Modern Typography" (1933).
20. Gustav Klutsis, "Le Photomontage comme Nouvel Aspect de l'Art d'Agitation" (Photomontage as a New Kind of Art of Agitation, 1930–1931), in Claude Leclanche-Boulé, *Le Constructivisme Russe. Typographies et Photomontages.* Paris: Flammarion, new edition 1991, p. 145. See also Serge Tretiakov, *ibid.,* p. 9.
21. Jan Tschichold, "Elementare Typographie", *op. cit.,* p. 198. (*This translation by John Tittensor.*)
22. László Moholy-Nagy, "Typophoto" (1925), *op. cit.,* p. 40. Reprinted in Bierut *et al., op. cit.,* pp. 25, 26.

that seem to move in a continuous loop: a case of using physical sensation to generate an indirect link between writing and photography.

Networking still images

With printed material being turned out in abundance, typophotographical experiment tempted numerous artists and designers in the 1920s. Significantly, the part played by letters in the self-portraits of Raoul Hausmann and El Lissitzky points up a typographical presence hardly to be expected in this setting. The unusual choice of alphabetical fragments signals their shared interest in the written as material in the raw state: AB, ABCD, ABCDEF and OPQRSTUVWXYZ (Hausmann) and XYZ (El Lissitzky) look like samples from a printer's catalogue. For Tschichold, the El Lissitzky self-portrait titled *The Builder* represents "his finest and most important work".[23] Using overlaid negatives and additional handwritten inscriptions, it conveys the image of a versatile designer. In the background we can make out the heading from El Lissitzky's notepaper, a graphic item closely tied to identification of the subject; a somewhat unorthodox choice for a self-portrait, but one serving as a bridge between photography and lettering.

Vibrant with subliminal suggestions, *The Builder* also seems to set up connections with other works, a situation doubtless reinforced by extensive reproduction: the same self-portrait is found, for example, on the cover of *Foto-Auge/Oeil et Photo/Photo-Eye* in 1929. Using superimposition El Lissitzky places a hand over his face, with his eye showing through it; a powerful association also found in *Lonely Metropolitan*, a 1932 photomontage by Herbert Bayer, in which two eyes are set into parallel, outstretched hands. The same motif recurs in another graphic work by Bayer, almost a half-century after *The Builder*, this time on the cover of *Herbert Bayer: Painter, Designer, Architect* (1967). This latter work was part of a context in which many typophotographic works made use of the hand – a trend clearly observable since the mid-1920s and signalled by Gustav Klutsis's propaganda posters and a composition by Karel Teige for Vítezslav Nezval's book of poetry *Abeceda* (The Alphabet): a unique sample of typophotography treated as "graphic poetry […] evoking the magic signs of the alphabet."[24]

The buzz set up in the world of graphics by the experiments of 1922–1925 tended to highlight a whole range of visual themes, objects and leitmotivs. The body (notably the eye and the hand), machines and manufactured items, means of locomotion and the evocation of speed all led to images of cameras, typewriters, spinning discs, industrial goods, roads, tyres and wheels. This trend extended to a quest for the dynamic, zestful, kinetic sensations typophotography could inject into the still image. A photograph by Rodchenko gives eloquent expression to this fascination with technology: plunging into the very substance of typography, *The Matrix* (1928) hymns the "cult of the rotary press"[25] in an image that singles out and exalts an object in general only ever seen by printers: a flong.[26] And just as in this example, numerous collages, montages,

23. Jan Tschichold (1965), cited in Sophie Lissitzky-Küppers (ed.), *El Lissitzky: Life, Letters, Texts*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1992, p. 390.
24. Karel Teige, "Modern Typography", *op. cit.*, p. 105. The reference is to the letter M in Nezval's book, published in Prague in 1926.
25. Expression used in *Russian Constructivist Posters*, *op. cit.*
26. "Flong: A compressed mass of paper sheets, forming a matrix or mold for stereotype plates." (*Webster's Dictionary*)

photographs and layouts used depictions of the actual technology of typophotography.[27] A draft cover of 1923, also by Rodchenko, for the magazine *Lef* (Left Front), combines painted letters and cut-out printed images of a typewriter and photographic equipment. In the same register Umbo came up with a striking collage, *Le Reporter Enragé* (The Rabid Reporter), showing a figure striding across, simultaneously, mountains, a cityscape and highways. The body comprises a face, a hand and other "limbs" made up of writing instruments, recording machines, a watch, a camera, and even a car and a plane: an accumulation of items testifying to contemporary interest in the media, mechanical reproduction, objects and constituent materials.

Down the decades and from country to country, ever-increasing echoes sprang up between works and source documents, artistic experiment and graphic design, original and reproduction. These sometimes surprising reciprocities were a summons to decompartmentalization, proceeding via thematic similarity, formal allusions and appropriation, but also, on occasion, calling to mind a quasi-latent image, something out of frame or psychologically suggested. In 1932 Bayer produced a self-portrait in the form of a mysterious photographic montage showing himself half-length and holding in one hand a "slice" of his body taken from the shoulder/arm joint. A poster designed by Wolfgang Weingart for a 1982 exhibition of Bayer's artworks takes a fragment of this portrait as its central motif: a close-up of part of the face, considerably enlarged, screened and colourised. Thus, after a half-century, an excerpt from a photo was given, so to speak, a new lease of life via its transformation into the core element of a poster.

Many typophotos incorporate source material that is not readily identifiable, sometimes unrecognisable and sometimes lost forever.[28] Taken as a whole the constituent images form a network that can be reconstructed like part of a puzzle whose pieces belong to different categories and time frames. This results from the very nature of a graphics capable of borrowing all sorts of preexisting images and drawing on a limitless typographic heritage. In addition the connections generated go beyond the visual dimension into the broader framework of graphic thinking. Bayer provides an eloquent example of this: his cover for *Herbert Bayer: Painter, Designer, Architect* shows an eye within a heart-shape set at the centre of the palm of a hand. Bayer himself described the act of creation as "not performed by the skilled hand alone, but […] a unified process in which 'head, heart, and hand play a simultaneous role'"[29] – a remark that reinforces the evident connections between graphic thinking, graphic practice and writings on the subject.

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27. Certain works of considerable graphic interest use photos of typographic equipment. One example is Piet Zwart's draft cover for the catalogue of the Trio printing works in the early 1930s. Another, closer to our own time, is a page from a Karl Gerstner calendar for the Barfüsser printing works, combining photography and photograms (reprinted in Kees Broos and Paul Hefting, *Grafische Vormgeving in Nederland*. Amsterdam/Antwerp: Uitgeverij L. J. Veen, 1993, p. 107; and in *Karl Gerstner, Rückblick auf 5 x 10 Jahre Graphik Design*. Ostfildern-Ruit, Hatje Cantz, 2001, p. 29).
28. Information is also often missing because of the common practice of not acknowledging photographers, other direct or indirect contributors and even the typeface designers whose creations sometimes play a crucial part in the work.
29. Herbert Bayer (1979), epigraph for Philip B. Meggs, *A History of Graphic Design*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, new edition, 1998.

Another example of this visual reverberation is a 1933 cover by Herbert Matter for the magazine *Typographische Monatsblätter*,[30] which bears the title "foto" in very large type and shows a face overlaid with a heavy luminous screen. Another photograph, most likely from the same series, would seem to indicate that the screen derives from a light effect obtained through the cane of a Marcel Breuer tubular chair. Here image and typography communicate directly via the heavy screening of the word "foto" which, occupying a significant part of the cover, comes across as both informative text and texture. More than simple typophotography, this composition, heightened with oblique-line effects and contrasts of colour, could be described as an interlocking of typography, photography, object and texture. Decades later the long-lived bilingual/trilingual *Typographische Monatsblätter* would present other landmark typophoto samples. During the 1970s, for instance, its covers and layout highlighted the innovations coming from the New Wave, a movement centering on the then very influential Wolfgang Weingart: on an astonishing 1971 cover by American designer Dan Friedman the letters of the word "Typografie", looking as though they have been randomly borrowed from neon signs, fly in a Z-shape down a New York street at night. This montage presents a novel treatment of a written form not dissociated from the image, but at the same time not in total fusion with the photograph.

Some years later a special Weingart issue of *Typographische Monatsblätter* presented a selection of his work between 1969–1976.[31] Weingart himself had already created something of a stir with his assertion that "Phototypesetting with its technical possibilities is leading today's typography into a game without game rules."[32] Shot through with stretchings of typefaces and words, and with alterations, reductions, shifts into bold, unusual leading effects, photo blowups, repetitions and fragments, Weingart's graphic experiments in this issue take us through what Moholy-Nagy so appositely called "optical gymnastics".[33] Coming some ten years before the digital breakthrough, the same issue of the magazine opened with the prophetic sentence, "The computer owns the future. Typographic handcraft is dying out." Armin Hofmann, a leading member of the Swiss school of typography, presented Weingart as a pioneer: "He is one of the few typographic designers to have set the typographic scene in motion. […] What is the state of the image in a system which technologically no longer distinguishes between typographic and photographic?"[34]

Testing the potential

Open-mindedness would seem to be indispensable to any approach to the sheer range of typophotography, whose interactions take place on so many different levels. The genre's limits are difficult to define, with its multiple facets including a seduction potential that readily lends itself to ideology, expressive capacities broadened by

30. 1933 was the year *Typografische Monatsblätter* was founded. In 1947 it merged with the *Revue Suisse de l'Imprimerie*, resulting in TM.RSI, which continues to appear to this day.
31. *Typographische Monatsblätter. SGM.RSI*, December 1976.
32. Wolfgang Weingart, draft of a 1964 article, reprinted in Wolfgang Weingart, *Weingart: Typography*. Baden (Switzerland): Lars Müller Publishers, 2000, p. 41.
33. László Moholy-Nagy, "Fotografie ist Lichtgestaltung" (Photography is Manipulation of Light, 1928), cited in Krisztina Passuth, *Moholy-Nagy*. London: Thames & Hudson, 1984. (*This translation by John Tittensor.*)
34. Armin Hofmann (intro.), Wolfgang Weingart et al., Projekte. *Weingart: Ergebnisse aus dem Typographie-Unterricht an der Kunstgewerbeschule Basel, Schweiz/Projects. Weingart: Typographic Research at the School of Design Basle, Switzerland*. Niederteufen: Niggli, 1979.

artistic – even poetic – input,[35] and intensive exploitation in advertising.[36] All of these strands point up the range and power of a composite procedure able to draw on an exceptional variety of properties – contrast, energy, originality, surprise, strangeness, effectiveness and impact – pushed to the point of visual pressure and takeover of public space. "The appeal of the new and the novel," Moholy-Nagy noted in 1927, "is one of the most active factors in *commercial art*; and so it now seems legitimate to introduce *photography* into commercial art."[37]

There was another, vital strand running through this key period in the history of modern graphics. It is worth remembering that the seminal texts saw the New Typography as a focal point for flexible, open-ended research; and indeed, receptivity, adventurousness and risk-taking were stimulants for a spirit of experimentation, with Moholy-Nagy setting the tone in 1923: "The essence and purpose of printing demand an uninhibited use of all linear directions […] all typefaces. […] A new language whose elasticity, variability and freshness of typographical composition is exclusively dictated by the inner law of expression and the optical effect."[38] Tschichold followed up with, "In typography the elementary design is never absolute or definitive, since the very notion of elementary design evolves […] in time with the transformation of the elements composing it (via inventions which bring new elements to typographic design – photography for example)." Elsewhere he would add that "the 'New Typography' […] knows no restrictions of form. […] One can use […] all historical or non-historical characters, all sorts of subdivisions of surfaces, and all arrangements of lines."[39]

Teige is in complete agreement: typography, he says, "does not interpret or reproduce the given text but constructs it optically, using it as the basis for the creation of a visual composition. To this aim it uses all types and sizes […] achieving elasticity, variability, and freshness of the typeset text. Besides, advertising has created a perfect combination of typography and photography, producing what Moholy-Nagy calls typofoto."[40]

This new, consciously exploratory path was dotted with tryouts. In 1924, for example, both Piet Zwart[41] and El Lissitzky included a photogram in visuals produced for industrial/promotional purposes, and these works are considered as being among the first in the genre. For Pelikan inks El Lissitzky came up with a design magnifying the mysterious silhouette of an ink bottle accompanied by an upright pen and a floating stopper; the bottle is stencilled with the word *Tinte* (ink), while the pen seems to have written the word "Pelikan", which shades off into distortion. Here the design takes

35. See for example *Abeceda* (Note 24) and Rodchenko's photomontages for Mayakovsky's poem *Concerning This* (1923).

36. For a critique of the graphic design of this period, see Maud Lavin, *Clean New World: Culture, Politics, Graphic Design*. Cambridge/London: MIT Press, 2001, pp. 2–67; Paul Jobling and David Crowley, *Graphic Design: Reproduction and Representation since 1800*. Manchester/New York: Manchester University Press, 1996, pp. 137–209.

37. László Moholy-Nagy, "Photography in Advertising", in Christopher Phillips, *Photography in the Modern Era: European Documents and Critical Writings, 1913–1940*. New York: Aperture, 1989, p. 86. (*This translation by John Tittensor.*)

38. László Moholy-Nagy, "The New Typography", in Bierut *et al., op. cit.*, p. 21.

39. Jan Tschichold, "Elementare Typographie", *op. cit.*, p. 9 and "Qu'est-ce que la Nouvelle Typographie?", *Arts et Métiers Graphiques* no. 19, 15 September 1930, p. 49. (*This translation by John Tittensor.*)

40. Karel Teige, "Modern Typography", *op. cit.*, p. 99.

41. A design by Piet Zwart for a 1924 standards manual for the NKF company is regarded as the first use of a photogram in this context. See the reproduction of the piece in Kees Broos, *Piet Zwart 1885–1977*. Van Gennep: Amsterdam, 1982, p. 45.

shape around a near-evanescent form whose words summon us to detect the distant referent – a bottle of ink. Treated as a negative, the image as a whole is set against a white ground in a final state that gave rise to the most-reproduced version of the poster.[42] Enraptured by these designs, Tschichold presented them in the "Photography and Typography" chapter of *The New Typography* as "a splendid example of typo-photo" (Zwart) and "a splendid example of his work in this field" (El Lissitzky).[43] Moholy-Nagy himself had already tested this way of working in the commercial art context: "As an experiment I used photograms to make title pages for books and magazines, and posters […]. The medium itself offered potent possibilities in this regard. […] I must insist on the fact that the originality of photography […] lies in its capacity to capture light phenomena and even render them palpable. […] When *cameraless* photography is used in the form of the photogram – writing with light – the relationships of the contrasts with the most delicate shades of grey can create a language […] capable of triggering an unmediated optical experience."[44]

Redefinitions and repercussions

How are we, so used to having typophoto clamouring for our attention, to imagine the impact of the growing presence of photography in printed material – especially posters – in the 1920s and 1930s? Surging through European graphics in the interwar years, this mixed media technique, whose deliberately attention-grabbing movement and startling visual balance endlessly demanded the eye of readers, passers-by, consumers and the curious, was associated with clarity and organisation. In quest of a new graphic grammar, designers made the most of spatial disposition and visible structure. Working with off-centring, displacement, asymmetry, obliquity, depth effects and high and low angles, they made unstinting use of all the resources of contrast and montage. The combination of a new medium and radical graphic reshaping reactivated optical perceptions and shook up people's visual habits. Mucha and Chéret were a world away from Zwart, Teige and Tschichold, yet only a few decades – sometimes no more than a generation – separated them. Even so, photography had been catching striking dramatic effects as early as the 1830s, from Talbot's "Photogenic Drawings" through to views of buildings and structures like the Crystal Palace, bridges, railways, factories and windmills.

Simultaneously impacting on graphics, typography, advertising and books, these changes were much written about as the artists who played a significant part in the adventure in the 1920s sought to define what was happening. In his short text for a Bauhaus exhibition catalogue in 1923, Moholy-Nagy emphasised that "Typography is a tool of communication. It must be communication in its most intense form. The emphasis must be on absolute clarity. […] Therefore priority: unequivocal clarity in all typological compositions."[45] In his *Thesis on Typography* Kurt Schwitters commented that "Photography is sharper and thus better than drawing. […] The impersonality of

42. The dual positive/negative state is also to be found in the El Lissitzky self-portrait: the reversible character of these typophotos thus provided the image with an extra dimension.

43. Jan Tschichold, *The New Typography*, *op. cit.*, pp. 93–94. In Zwart's case, what is shown is a reproduction of a 1928 variant on the 1924 original.

44. László Moholy-Nagy, "La Réclame photoplastique" (1926) and "La Photographie dans la réclame" (1927), *Peinture, photographie, film et autres écrits sur la photographie*, tr. Catherine Wermester. Nîmes: Jacqueline Chambon, 1997, pp. 129, 137. (*This translation by John Tittensor.*)

45. László Moholy-Nagy, "The New Typography", *op. cit.*, p. 21.

print is better than the personal style of the artist."[46] Teige was of the same opinion: modern communication "preferred using photography and photomechanical images to drawings, woodcuts, etc. It preferred simple, impersonal types […]. Modern typography [learned] a lesson from the achievements of promotional and commercial art."[47]

This redefinition of needs and the means of meeting them came with a plethora of visual solutions that have been part of the graphic design scene ever since. In the field of typefaces, for example, the exclusive use of lower case letters for headings, proper names and texts, so prized from the mid-twenties onwards, is now so widespread that it sometimes passes unnoticed.[48] Page layout was a matter of equal concern. Approaching the notion of "optical gymnastics" in his own way, Teige looked forward to "a magazine illustrated with photomontages […] treating the page not as a sealed entity but as a form of organisation allowing image and text to unfold from one page to the next […] so that the typographical layout forces the reader to read the magazine from beginning to end."[49] Today's graphic design still bears the stamp of these ideas. Jost Hochuli, a book design specialist, sometimes composes covers by borrowing from the layout – character grid and columns – of the pages inside, thus achieving visual results in which the cover alone gives one the impression of already being inside the book.[50]

Cross-fertilisations and special cases

Typophoto endowed visual communication with a whole new dimension, and many designers, once they had got over their initial feverishness, set about constructive experimentation. Some, like Rodchenko and Moholy-Nagy, gave their art a social function: aspiring to change the world, they sometimes redefined their role and changed the emphasis of their work, describing themselves as "constructors" or, in Raoul Hausmann's case, as a *monteur* (assembler). In 1923 El Lissitzky gave himself a credit as "book constructor" for his layout of Mayakovsky's *For the Voice*;[51] and when the latter collaborated with Rodchenko, the pair signed their work "Mayakovsky-Rodchenko Advertising-Constructor". A hybrid form if ever there was one, typophoto as adopted by the artists of the time opened up endless visual avenues and quickly revealed its capacity for optical seduction, suggestion and manipulation. Summing up the situation in 1925, Moholy-Nagy remarked, "The possible uses of photography are already innumerable […] publicity, posters, political propaganda, […] photo-books, i.e. photographs in place of text, typophoto [etc.]".[52] The medium seemed torn between free, creative expression on the one hand and subservience to commerce or ideology on the other.

46. Kurt Schwitters, "Thesis on Typography". Hanover: Merz no. 11, 1925, cited in Serge Lemoine (ed.), Kurt Schwitters, ex. cat. Paris: Centre Pompidou/RMN, 1994, p. 189. (*This translation by John Tittensor.*)

47. Karel Teige, "Modern Typography", *op. cit.*, p. 99–100.

48. One example is the covers of books published under the Christian Bourgois imprint in France.

49. Karel Teige, "Fototypografie" (1931), cited in Frantisek Smejkal, Rostislav Svacha and David Elliott, *Devetsil: Czech Avant-Garde Art, Architecture and Design of the 1920s and 1930s*, ex. cat. Oxford: Museum of Modern Art, 1990, p. 59. (*This translation by John Tittensor.*)

50. See *Jost Hochuli: Printed Matter, Mainly Books/Jost Hochuli: Drucksachen, vor allem Bücher*, collective work. Zurich: Niggli, 2002.

51. Vladimir Mayakovsky and El Lissitzky, *For the Voice*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2000 (published in Russian in 1923).

With the new forms meeting the most diverse – and even contradictory – needs, the same graphic agenda could be applied to utterly different projects. A significant if surprising parallel can made, for instance, between a double-page spread in *Harper's Bazaar* of October 1934 and a page from *USSR in Construction* of February of the same year. The layouts use an identical visual system in the context of magazines that both regularly used big names in the design, photography and graphics fields.[53] Thus two radically different settings – a fashion glossy and a multilingual Soviet propaganda sheet – are home to analogous compositions: two tilted central columns of text that turn the normally vertical edges into pronounced obliques and are accompanied by a similarly canted photograph. In the first instance a female silhouette in a long dress, photographed by Man Ray for a publication under the artistic direction of Alexey Brodovitch; and in the second a low-angle shot of an officer on a rostrum, in a montage by Sophie Lissitzky-Küppers and El Lissitzky. The juxtaposition shows just how the typophoto innovations then going ahead in leaps and bounds in the press and elsewhere could result in a similar visual response to totally dissimilar communication requirements. And while the applications of typophoto thus emerge as far from easy to categorise, the sheer power of this kind of graphics remains etched on the collective memory of today's designers and continues to resurface in their work.[54]

The examples cited so far hinge on typophoto, often used in a visibly effective way. However, the nature and development of the medium also led to breakaway approaches, with photography subjected to indirect use, outright elimination or an appropriation aimed at achieving a boomerang effect. The work of brothers Georgii and Vladimir Stenberg is a first, distinctive case in point. They put photography and the photomontage principle to work in their posters, notably in the film field: using a device of their own making, they produced drawings from photographs or photograms projected onto a wall; the result was what they described as "magical realism", with the photographic image that had served as intermediary for the ultimate drawing expunged but still perceptible. Other graphic artists of the 1920s opted for a radical rejection of photography that can still be observed in our own time. In an interview dating from 1926, when typophoto was becoming all the rage in Eastern and Central Europe, Cassandre, whose graphic work emerged mainly from drawing and painting, refers to the "vulgar photographic plate".[55] Contemporary Swiss poster designer Niklaus Troxler is an example of original experimentation spread over several decades and deliberately keeping its distance from photography; quite simply, Troxler explains, because "there are already enough posters using photographs." Indeed, today's media/advertising imagery could hardly survive without the photography which, in Cassandre's time, was a crucial aspect of graphic innovation. So while some designers have chosen to turn their backs on it – and thus on typophoto – artists have integrated it into their oeuvres: in her spectacular installations Barbara Kruger uses hard-hitting typophoto overkill to subvert media pressures, with "the idea of using a medium rather than being used by it."[56]

52. László Moholy-Nagy, *Painting, Photography, Film, op. cit.*, pp. 35–36.
53. *Harper's Bazaar* (October 1934, pp. 52–53), double page titled "Paris 1935" reprinted in Gabriel Bauret, *Alexey Brodovitch*. Paris: Assouline, 1998. *URSS in Construction* (February 1934), reprinted in Horacio Fernandez, *Fotografía pública/Photography in Print 1919-1939*, ex. cat. Madrid: Aldeasa/Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, 1999, p. 226.
54. See for example certain layouts by David Carson and Cyan.
55. Henri Mouron, *A. M. Cassandre*, tr. Michael Taylor. New York: Rizzoli, 1985. (*This translation by John Tittensor.*)
56. Barbara Kruger *et al.*, *Barbara Kruger*. Los Angeles: Museum of Contemporary Art, 1999, p. 191.

Facing the media and the times

A protean attractor of all sorts of experimenters, typophoto goes hand in hand with the will to change. Late twentieth-century historians of typography and photography highlight the reciprocation between photomontage, graphics and basic typography, together with the importance of the role they played in the 1920s and 1930s. According to *Typography: When, Who, How*, "Elementare typographie […] was intended to form the basis of a practical, informative form of visual communication for the rest of the century."[57] For Michel Frizot, "Photography, through photomontage, was becoming a force for change in graphic art", while "graphics was virtually a compulsory stepping-stone to modernity".[58] Artists were sometimes tempted or won over by experiments in this area, but commercial artists and designers, working to commissions, were quick to spot the possibilities. Pushed to their limits, typophoto and photomontage would be used for political ends and propaganda during the darkest days of totalitarianism, even as they helped hone potent attacks on the values and powers that be of the time.

And so, put to all kinds of uses, typophoto immediately found its place in a context of mounting media influence. Artists were enthused by mass communication, mass production, printed material, popular graphics and the ambient visual culture, and in 1925 Moholy-Nagy, anticipating the media boom, observed that "The potential for development of our means of communication and information […] could result in a marked shrinkage of the terrain of printed communication […]. The mass impact of film, the 'gramophone' and radio could bring about a major upheaval." This kind of competition, he explained, would require that we "attempt to endow typography with an expressive power it has never yet attained, so that it can push its performance to the maximum."[59] Moreover, as typophoto was taking shape, image communication and interpretation were offering new experiences and technical advances. Remote transmission of photographs, for example, came well ahead of "elementare typographie" and the New Typography, which were themselves contemporary with numerous other experiments, such as Bob Brown's "Readies" machine, based on a single, continuously unfolding line of text. The idea originated out of "electric street signs, the movies, microfilm, the telegraph, etc." As Brown saw it, "The written word hasn't kept up with the age [the 1930s]" and the "ready-to-read" had still not arrived. He predicted that "Pocket reading machines will be the vogue then; reading matter probably will be radioed and words recorded directly on the palpitating ether."[60] As potent today as they were then, these ideas, like Moholy-Nagy's, find an echo in the current context of new technology, interactivity and digital media.

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57. Friedrich Friedl, Nikolaus Ott and Bernard Stein, *Typographie : Quand, qui, comment/Typographie. Wann, wer, wie/Typography. When, Who, How*. Cologne: Könemann, 1998, p. 40.
58. Michel Frizot, "Metamorphoses of the Image", *A New History of Photography, op. cit.*, p. 435; Introduction to *Photomontages*. Paris: Centre National de la Photographie, Photopoche series, 1987 (*This translation by John Tittensor*).
59. László Moholy-Nagy, "Contemporary Typography" (1925), cited in Passuth, *op. cit.*, 1984. (*This translation by John Tittensor.*)
60. Bob Brown, in *In transition, A Paris Anthology*. New York: Doubleday, 1990. See also Jaroslav Andel, *Avant-Garde Page Design 1900–1950*. New York: Delano Greenidge Editions, 2002, pp. 18–20.

Since its genesis typophoto has gone hand in glove with a kind of visual febrility and fluctuating but sometimes urgent calls to the senses. As a medium it transcends the simple co-presence of photography and typography,[61] for among other striking consequences the encounter between the two gives rise to manipulations and distortions of letters facilitated by photographic technology and even more so by computers.[62] Multimedia now naturally encompasses typophoto, multiplying its possibilities via ASCII art, expressive digital typography, three-dimensionality, etc. Always closely connected to technology, typophoto is continuing to see its fields of exploration widening.

If we take a reverse historical approach, other interpretations emerge. Because it creates a relationship between text and image that goes beyond mere juxtaposition, typophoto is also one of the heirs of chromolithography – and even of medieval manuscripts. Strange as it may seem, the etymology of the word "illuminate" (to light up, make bright, embellish) provides a reminder of the ancient writing/light link and its enduring force in the graphics sphere. And if we go back much further in time, another avenue opens up in the interpretation of typophoto: setting aside its avant-garde associations, might we not imagine it as a vast entity ultimately challenging writing and its powers? In a manner of speaking, does not typophoto provide a way of harking back to the inherently "mixed" character of the earliest forms of writing and the part graphics played in them?[63] Whatever the case, its "mixedness" makes for a particularly good fit with the digital, that crucial new phase in the ongoing career of the visual.

Translated from French by John Tittensor

61. Both a photograph of printing equipment and poster lettering treated as a spatialised object, with lighting and depth effects, overprinting, etc., can look like typophoto. One rewarding exercise in this respect consists in comparing Moholy-Nagy's *Pneumatik* poster (reproduced in "Elementare Typographie") with an architecture photograph by John Havinden, brother of commercial artist Ashley Havinden (reproduced in *Fotografía Pública/Photography in Print, op. cit.,* p. 115) and a car race poster by Max Huber (reproduced in Lewis Blackwell, *Twentieth-Century Type.* London: Laurence King Publishing, 2004, p. 92).

62. See among other examples Franco Grignani's experiments, Massin's explorations and the "exploding" of Camille Bryen's poem *Hépérile* by Raymond Hains and Jacques de la Villeglé. Grignani once explained, "My own research, gradually developed since 1953 in this field, has been devoted to the projection of alphabetic signs through optical filters creating distortions. There was no need of anything new but the analysis of the conditions of typographical reading by the mechanical speed of locomotive means, by interference due to transparent partitions in architecture, or by resort to forms as reflected by bent or specular surfaces." (Franco Grignani, "Critical Essay on Current Typography", Helmut Schmid [ed.], *Typography Today.* Tokyo: Seibundo Shinkosha, 2003 (1st ed. 1980), pp. 124-125. Closer to our own time, also see certain posters by April Greiman (*Pacific Wave*, 1981) and P. Scott Makela (*The New Discourse*, 1990).

63. See Anne-Marie Christin, *L'Image écrite ou la déraison graphique.* Paris: Flammarion, new edition, 2001, p. 11 *et passim.*

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Victor Margolin

The many faces of photography in the Weimar Republic

For many Germans, the Weimar Republic was a new beginning. The time of the Kaisers had ended and after the Russian Revolution, the Socialists were in a strong position to build a new liberal culture. Photography was very much a part of this project in numerous ways. First, as used by the Berlin Dadaists, it was a means to criticize the old regime. Second, it was a way to document and make comprehensible the new social reality that was emerging. And third, it was a medium with its own properties that could be exploited as a new modern art form.

In this article, I will be writing about the different uses of photography during the Weimar years and I will argue as I already noted that the medium developed from several different points of departure. First I would like to mention the Dadaists and their use of photography as a subversive medium that criticized not only powerful political figures but also the language of power itself. Among the Berlin Dadaists were Richard Huelsenbeck, John Heartfield, George Grosz, Raoul Hausmann and Hannah Höch, the only woman in the group. Their principle medium was photomontage and one could say that they invented it.[1]

The Dadaists produced photomontage by joining parts of photographs together in new compositions as John Heartfield did in his short-lived publication, *Jedermann sein eigner Fussball* (Every Man His Own Football, 1919). For Heartfield, photomontage was a way to extract the images of Germany's top politicians from their proper context and present them in a situation of ridicule. In that sense, photomontage functioned for him similarly to caricature, although he critiqued his subjects not by changing their physical characteristics through drawings but instead by putting photographs of them in a new context.

This principle was comparable for Hannah Höch in her well-known photomontage, *Schnitt mit dem küchenmesser Dada durch dir letzte weimarer Bierbauchkulturepoche Deutschlands* (Cut with a Kitchen Knife Dada through the Last Weimar Beer Belly Cultural Epoch of Germany, 1919–1920), a dense and complex image of post

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1. The claim by Heartfield and Grosz to have invented photomontage was contested by the Russian artist Gustav Klucis, who argued that he had begun to use photomontage in Russia independent of the Dadaists at about the same time. This is the case and we may never know who was actually the first to use the new medium.

First World War Weimar. What differentiates Höch's photomontage from Heartfield's is that she created a syntax in which the fragments were recombined in a new way to construct a different visual reality. For Höch, Weimar was chaotic and disruptive, not only politically but also sexually as she indicates by creating figures of mixed gender whose heads do not match their bodies. For Höch, photomontage was both a way to critique the German ruling class and to explore complicated issues of sexuality that the dominant culture repressed. By combining the photographic images with fragments of text that contain the word "Dada," Höch identified her oppositional view of Weimar politics with the Dada spirit.

For the Berlin Dadaists, photomontage replaced painting as their principal means of expression. In *Da Dandy* (1919) by Hannah Höch and *ABCD* (1923–1924) by Raoul Hausmann, the combination of photographic fragments as well as pieces of text created a form of visual representation that allowed the two artists to address new themes that, one could argue, would not easily be addressed through painting. What made the images powerful were the documentary traces of the photographs that were coded as realistic even as they were placed in unrealistic combinations.

The creation of photomontage was one point of departure for the development of Weimar photography. A second was Constructivism. One of the main figures of international Constructivism was the Hungarian artist László Moholy-Nagy, who came to Berlin from Budapest in 1920. His first engagement with photography was in 1922, when he began to make photograms or photographs without a camera. Moholy-Nagy had already rejected realism in painting and his approach to photography was based on the idea that its principal subject matter was the medium itself. Thus, his photograms, which he created by placing objects on photographic paper that was sensitive to light, depicted the process of photography rather than a subject external to it.

Moholy-Nagy joined the Bauhaus in 1923 and became the editor, with Walter Gropius, of the series of Bauhaus books (*Bauhausbücher*) that the school began to publish. In 1923, the year of the Bauhaus exhibition, Moholy-Nagy wrote an essay on the "New Typography" for the exhibition catalogue, where he called photography the new story telling device of civilization. For him, it could produce an accurate objective representation rather than a more subjective one that resulted from a drawing.
In 1925, Moholy-Nagy published his own book, *Malerei, Fotografie, Film* (Painting, Photography, Film), where he stated his belief that photography was an extension of human vision that enabled humans to see the world in ways that were not otherwise possible. In his own photographs, he adopted unusual angles and compositions that emphasized formal relationships rather than documentary facts. Pictures such as *The Diving Board* (1931), and *At Coffee* (c. 1926) are examples of this technique.
In both there are strong compositions that emphasize the formal composition of the photograph rather than its documentary origins. As a way of shifting the viewer's attention from the original subject matter to its formal possibilities, Moholy-Nagy employed two unusual perspectives, the bird's eye view or view from above and the worm's eye view or view from below. The photograph *Spring, Berlin* (1928) depicts a street as seen from above so as to distort the scene and the photograph of balconies from the Bauhaus dormitory, taken from below, introduces the bottoms of the balconies and the diagonal as formal elements that dominate the composition.

Scholars often contrast the photographs of Moholy-Nagy with those of Albert Renger-Patzsch, another photographer who was also interested in the "sachlich" or objective depiction of objects. Like Moholy-Nagy, Renger-Patzsch adopted new photographic perspectives but, unlike him, he focused on the objects themselves rather than their formal relationships. After the subversion of Dada photomontage and the Constructivist theories of Moholy-Nagy, we can consider Renger-Patzsch's emphasis on the sharp representation of objects to be a third point of departure. In his photograph of a stairwell, he shot it from below thus producing a new representation of it while in his picture of metal industrial objects, he depicted their repetition or seriality in order to emphasize their industrial source. In 1928, he published a collection of his photographs in a book entitled *Die Welt ist schön* (The World is Beautiful) although he originally chose as the title *Die Dinge* (The Things), which clearly indicated the focus of his interest.

Another photographer who concentrated on objects was Karl Blossfeldt but he focused on plants rather than manufactured things. In his photographs, Blossfeldt used a powerful lense to magnify the forms of nature, thus representing them as formal objects that had not been seen before. This was a new, more clinical, way to observe nature that contrasted sharply with the previous romantic views of landscape.

August Sander continued this clinical description of reality although he photographed people rather than plants or things. Like a botanist, he catalogued human types with the intention to publish an extensive documentation of Weimar figures according to profession and class. Sander called his documentary project *Menschen des 20sten Jahrhunderts* (People of the Twentieth Century) and published his first collection of photographs, *Antlitz der Zeit* (Face of Our Time) in 1929.

A fourth point of departure is press photography in which the Germans played an important role. During the Weimar years, the press – newspapers and illustrated magazines – stimulated a widespread interest in the current events. Besides serving as a chronicle of political and social activities, the press was also a medium to display the evidence of modernity as one could see it in fashion, architecture, art, and advertising. Erich Salomon was one of the leading press photographers, working extensively for the Ullstein press empire. He used the new Ermanox camera, which had a fast lense and with it, he was able to photograph many events that had been impossible to represent with larger and slower cameras. His 1930 photograph of sleeping ministers is an example of catching several ministers off guard as they rested between meetings.

The German illustrated magazines such as the *Berliner Illustrirte Zeitung* and the *Münchner Illustrierte Zeitung* developed new formats for photographers such as the feature story that combined a journalistic text with a series of photographs. To create these stories, a new profession developed – the picture editor, who selected and arranged the photographs. Perhaps the best of these editors was Stefan Lorant, who worked for the *Münchner Illustrierte Zeitung*.

Among these illustrated magazines was the *Arbeiter Illustrierte Zeitung* (*AIZ*) a left-wing publication that adopted the techniques of the bourgeois press. Many of the photographs that were published in the *AIZ* were made by worker photographers. They were part of the *Arbeiterfotograf* movement that was supported by the KPD or German Communist Party. The worker photographers, as one can see in pictures by Eugen Heilig such as *Communist Party Demonstration* or *Unemployed Man Living on Garbage*,

chose subjects that publicized the activities of the German left but also criticized living and working conditions in Germany. While the press photographs of Erich Salomon selectively presented images of Weimar life as natural rather than class-oriented, the worker photographers made their photographs with a polemical intention to promote the activities of the left, particularly the Communist Party, and to present a visual critique of Weimar bourgeois culture.

Actually, variations of these four points of departure – Dadaist photomontage, Constructivism, the New Objectivity, and press photography – were evident in the wide range of commercial design, particularly advertising and publishing. In 1925, the typographer Jan Tschichold published a special issue of the printing magazine, *Typographische Mitteilungen* that was devoted to "Elementary Typography." This was Tschichold's first attempt to produce a set of rules for typography and graphic design that was based on the visual principles of international Constructivism. Among the ten principles he proposed, one stated that photography should be the chosen visual medium of the new graphic designer. Tschichold began to use photography in his own design work as one can see in this booklet for the Gerasch Company, where photographs were integrated into a new layout strategy that included ample white space, flush left or right typography, and a limited use of colors.

These techniques were evident as well in a series of weekly posters that Tschichold did in 1927 for the Phoebus Palast cinema in Munich. While some were strictly typographic, others incorporated photographic fragments within the compositions. Tschichold also used photography regularly on the magazine covers he designed such those for the design magazine, *Die Form*. In 1928, he published his important book *Die neue Typographie* (The New Typography) in which he enlarged his theories of elementary typography and provided examples of how the new principles could be applied in many different types of commercial design. In 1929, as part of the Deutscher Werkbund's exhibition *Film und Foto*, Tschichold and Franz Roh published a book called *Foto-Auge* (Photo-Eye) which included examples of the different kinds of photos that one could see in the Weimar Republic.

Following the lead of Tschichold, other designers found ways to use photography in their advertising projects. Max Burchartz and Johannes Canis worked extensively for the Bochumer Verein, a large industrial company in Bochum that produced industrial machinery and machine parts. The designers used photographic fragments as a way to document the products of the company. This was similar in an advertising sense to the kinds of visual catalogues Blossfeldt was making with photographs of plants or Sander with photographs of people.

The subversive technique of photomontage was introduced to commercial art by John Heartfield, who had actually trained as a graphic designer. Along with George Grosz, Heartfield was one of the first members of the KPD, which was founded in 1919. He used photographs in party propaganda such as his emblem for the Red Front, an artist's organization within the party and his poster for the 1928 election in which he urged voters to select List 5, the Communist list, which he equated with the five fingers of the hand that rejects the enemy.

For the Malik Verlag, the left-wing publishing house that his brother Wieland Herzfelde founded in 1916, Heartfield created many photographic book covers that were also

an important influence on designers abroad. His use of photographs was actually more appropriate than drawings since many of the books were about actual events, even if they were fiction, and the photographic covers emphasized the documentary aspect of the texts.

Beginning in 1932, Heartfield began to do photomontages for the *AIZ*. He developed a technique that resulted in more seamless images than the original Dadaists could produce. For this he frequently used an airbrush to create powerful political images that criticized Hitler and then, after the magazine moved to Prague in 1933, the Nazi regime.

The bourgeois world of the illustrated weeklies was exemplified in advertising by the photographs of Albert Renger-Patzsch who applied his technique of sharp representation to the promotion of products one could see in his advertising photograph for Kaffee Hag.

Some of the design schools in Berlin were quick to begin teaching advertising photography in the early 1920s but the Bauhaus did not have a photography course until 1928 when it hired Walter Peterhans. Peterhans was interested in advertising and with his students did many experiments to explore how objects could be depicted in dramatic ways. Among the best students of advertising design at the Bauhaus in the early 1930s were Grete Stern and Ellen Auerbach, who formed Studio ringl+pit to undertake advertising commissions. Their images, however, differed from the photographs of Renger-Patzsch because the photographers brought an additional expressive quality to them.

By the late 1920s, photography was an important medium in all aspects of Weimar culture and this importance was recognized by the Deutscher Werkbund, which put on a large photographic exhibition in 1929 called *Film und Foto*. Although, it featured different kinds of photography, including contributions from abroad, the work of Moholy-Nagy played a central role in the Werkbund's promotion of the "Neue Fotografie" or New Photography. Moholy-Nagy's techniques of using photograms, negatives, and unusual angles were also evident in the photographic publications. In 1933, when Hitler came to power, the complexity of Weimar photographic practice was reduced to a more unified form of visual propaganda. The most prominent Nazi photographer was Heinrich Hoffman who was famous primarily because he documented Hitler's every move. Though the diversity of Weimar photography ended when the Nazis came to power, its influence spread to many parts of the world, both during the Weimar Republic's existence and until today.

Michel Wlassikoff

Futura, Europe and photography

This contribution aims to show how a typeface – Futura, designed by Paul Renner between 1924 and 1927 – came to be associated with the presentation of photography when this was emerging as a discipline in its own right, namely in 1925–1935, a period which also witnessed the establishment of the principles that would define contemporary graphic design and guide its approach for decades, notably through the concept of "typophoto." It also aims to show that this new combination of text and photography engendered numerous paradoxes – so much so, indeed, that the acute ideological conflicts of the day were reflected and exacerbated in these "details" of the evolutions of forms and mentalities.

Towards a New Typography

Typography was put to use in the second third of the nineteenth century by the German Reich as a tool designed to serve Pan-Germanic aims. Before the war, the Deutscher Werkbund, founded by Hermann Muthesius, considered it as one of the disciplines most conducive to the rationalization of industrial production and to the streamlining of forms in accordance with architectonic concepts. During the First World War, the Normenausschuss der Deutschen Industrie[1] began to implement standards of measurement and production designed to promote the war effort. It was within this framework that Paul Renner established the "typographic rules" to be used by printers. With the return of peace, typographic questions became even more important in Germany, where reconstruction was now the great priority. Modern architects and typographers united their efforts in order to meet essential needs. They were supported by the public authorities and leading companies, which developed the DIN standardization system[2] with a view to rationalizing production and facilitating its international dissemination.

The main scientific foundations for this typographic rationalization promoted in Germany were laid by Émile Javal in his authoritative book *Physiologie de la lecture et*

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1. Founded in 1917, the Normenausschuss der Deutschen Industrie (NADI: German Industry Standardization Committee) became the Deutscher Normenausschuss (DNA: German Standardization Committee) in 1926 and then, in 1975, the Deutsches Institut für Normung (DIN: German Standardization Institute).
2. DIN: Deutsche Industrie-Norm.

de l'écriture.[3] By means of empirical experimentation, this researcher had been able to determine that reading was a process based on optical mechanics that proceeded by blocks of words and a sequence of associations that were discontinuous with the meaning they suggested. The tall forms of letters were the most immediately recognizable, and lowercase ones were more legible than uppercase. Serifs made everyday reading easier but proved less decisive than one would expect: the height of the eye and the relation between contour and counterform were just as important in this respect, if not more so. From this, many champions of a "New Typography" moved to conclude that a perfectly designed roman antiqua type would be suited to all types of reading and readers. Indeed, they felt encouraged to do so by the advocates of a new German script, the first principles of which were laid down by Walter Porstmann in *Sprache und Schrift*, published in 1920. Porstmann argued for a radical reform of spelling, the complete abandonment of capitals and the elaboration of fonts that would offer exact phonetic transcriptions. Porstmann was indeed linked to the research done by the Deutscher Normenausschuss and to the conception of the DIN standards.

Rationalizing the use of letters and integrating this into industrial processes of production and standardization, and making all printed texts simpler and clearer to read, were central concerns for modernist typographers in the early 1920s. However, the Constructivist architect El Lissitzky,[4] the painter Kurt Schwitters and the typographer Jan Tschichold soon came to the fore with their assertion of a more radical "New Typography" in which gothic characters were simply abandoned, and geometrical, sanserif roman typefaces were used, as far as possible from all national references, and opening onto a complete reform of writing as part of a revolutionary, social and political process of universal scope.

As of 1923, the Bauhaus was one of the main centres for the emergence and theoretical and practical deployment of the concepts of the New Typography. It was here that El Lissitzky began to include typography in his teaching, while subordinating it to architecture, and that László Moholy-Nagy developed his notion of typophoto. In 1925 Herbert Bayer, a student and then teacher at this school, designed an alphabet without capital letters, soon to be named Universal, which, he argued, represented the "search for a new script." As for Josef Albers, he devised a modular alphabet, also without capitals, suitable for international use. In Munich, Jan Tschichold sketched out an alphabet in the same experimental register that was suitable for all supports. Presenting it in the journal *Typographische Mitteilungen*[5] in an article titled "Yet Another New Script," he pointed out that this was not a new typeface, but the typographic transcription of a phonetic system.

For these advocates of a radical form of New Typography, books could not be the main vector of the change they wished to see. Their preferred channels were their own teaching activity at the Bauhaus, the mass distribution of the printed press, and insertion into the everyday visual landscape. Still, their experiments did not get beyond the drawing board, since none of the resulting characters were engraved. Nevertheless, they did influence the work of Paul Renner who, with the support of the

3. Émile Javal, *Physiologie de la lecture et de l'écriture*. Paris: Alcan, 1905.
4. El Lissitzky, "Topographie der Typographie", *Merz*, no. 4, July 1923.
5. *Typographische Mitteilungen*, supplement to issue no. 3, March 1930.

Bauer typefoundry, launched Futura in 1927. This geometrical typeface became a competitor and rival of Rudolf Koch's Kabel, published that same year by the Klingsor typefoundry. However, neither Renner nor Koch were concerned to overturn the fundamentals of script. Futura represented the culmination of work on the geometry of lettering, based on roman capitals, which for Renner constituted the essence of Western script, whether roman or gothic. His approach, like Koch's, was directly in line with the concerns of the Deutscher Werkbund, and Futura took more from the roman alphabet created by Peter Behrens for the visual identity of AEG between 1907 and 1914, than it did from the projects and theoretical statements of Jan Tschichold or the Bauhaus. Renner and Koch were at the forefront of innovation, helping to renew their discipline with the conviction that, if supported by a beneficially streamlined form of script that could be understood by all, and not just by German speakers, German production could help to restore the dynamism of the nation that promoted them. The development of geometrical sanserif typefaces was the result of an objective alliance between the revolutionaries who wanted to overthrow the hierarchy and replace it with a universal constructivist order, and the disciples of the Werkbund whose great priority was to reinvigorate the German nation, whose strength they believed to be intact in spite of the war.

This alliance was reflected in a striving for pure, rigorous and stylised forms inspired by the ones advocated by modernist architects. Paul Renner thus invoked Le Corbusier. The overturning of the typographic scale of values with reference to the concepts of modern architecture was a shared concern. According to the traditional hierarchy, a major typeface, and therefore the typography that used it, was designed primarily for books. But the book was not the matrix from which German modernist sanserifs were generated. The text presenting the Bauer typefoundry's specimen of Futura was explicit on this point: Renner's type was designed for every conceivable kind of support (in other words, all those generated by modernity). It was revolutionary in that it positioned itself as the solution to the problems encountered by typography, but in moving along the traditional hierarchy in reverse order. We can even say that it was first validated by its use in public displays, proving itself an excellent alphabet for road signs and other information systems, whose development is both stimulated and ordered. In 1925 Renner collaborated with the urban planner Ernst May on a new public signage system for the city of Frankfurt, adapting the character he was working on at the time, Futura, to make it easier and quicker to read from a distance.[6]

As pointed out in the presentation text accompanying the second specimen produced by the Bauer typefoundry in 1929, Futura was also a character that could be used for titling, and went perfectly with photographs. It was expected to respond to the problematics of "typophoto" discussed by Moholy-Nagy,[7] and of photomontage, as employed by all New Typographers in advertising and political

6. Cf. Christopher Burke, *Paul Renner: the Art of Typography*. London: Hyphen Press, 1998, p. 54, 88, 90, and in particular this excerpt from a letter Renner wrote to Karl H. Salzmann in 1944: " Futura was the type that, already in 1925, had to be applied to everything in Frankfurt am Main by the order of the City Planning Office," n. 39, p. 88. According to Burke, in 1927 an issue of the periodical *Das neue Frankfurt* reproduced a series of photographs showing Futura in use in the signage system, on the front of official buildings and on shop signs.
7. László Moholy-Nagy, *Malerei, Fotografie, Film [Peinture, photography, film]*, Bauhausbücher 8, 1925. According to Moholy-Nagy, typophoto was "visual communication represented with the greatest exactitude," the two pillars of this association being mastery of light, conceived as the culmination of pictorial research, and the practice of off-centre or asymmetrical composition.

propaganda but also in magazines. In fact, as Renner himself emphasized in his writings, notably those published by *Gebrauchsgraphik*, the neutral yet contrasted "colour" of text composed in Futura allowed for felicitous combinations with photography, enhancing the presentation of the document on the page. He did not, however, draw attention to the possible synergy permitted by his typeface in compositions combining lettering and photography, as practised in photomontage, a form then at its apogee.

The journal *Gebrauchsgraphik* began using it as a character for its running text in 1929 and made ready use of its variants in capitals to present the work of the New Vision photographers. This was the case with the "Modern Photography" issue, published in 1930, which acclaimed the designs of Umbo and Herbert Bayer.[8] But Futura was seen here as a stylish companion of photography, and not as a typeface that lent itself to every kind of use.

Deployed as a character for titles but *also* for running text in *Gebrauchsgraphik*, Futura came to be seen by typographers both in Germany and abroad (the journal was translated into English) as a model of excellence and as the perfect example of a sanserif that met the needs of bookwork. In other words, because it performed all the functions of modern text, it could lay claim to the highest rung of the hierarchy. Bauer's technical and industrial know-how was mobilized to this end, and it would seem that it was the typographer and type designer Heinrich Jost who supervised the Futura programme at the typefoundry, where it was significantly reworked in comparison to Renner's models, in accordance with the many different variations in type size and weight introduced between 1927 and 1932.

Although the names given to the specimens of Futura were accompanied by pompous slogans – "Die Schrift unserer Zeit,"[9] and "Die Schrift die Welt eroberte"[10] –, Renner was at pains to point out that it was first of all an "eminently German" character: "Every people has the type face it deserves, which corresponds to its true nature. What then would our type face be, if not the very expression of the true, authentic German soul, at once young and old, outmoded and yet with a rich future before it?"[11]

Futura met with a mixed response from the New Typographers. Kurt Schwitters tried it out for the graphic code of the city of Hanover, but the other members of the Ring Neue Werbegestalter, and Jan Tschichold especially, preferred Akzidenz Grotesk. It is a striking fact that Futura was more or less absent from the Ring's major publication, *Gefesselter Blick*, a collection published by the Rasch brothers in Stuttgart in 1930, and featuring work by all the members of the association (who did not include Renner). Throughout its pages we find block letters combined with photography in a great variety of compositions for posters, press advertisements, catalogue covers and pages, etc., but nearly always hand-drawn or belonging to the family of display Grotesques, or rustic letters, which had a strong visual impact but none of the complexity or purity of form found in Futura.

8. Kurt Hirschfeld, "Die moderne Photography/Modern Photography", *Gebrauchsgraphik*, vol. 71, no. 7, July 1930, p. 44–52.
9. Literally, "The character of our times."
10. "The character that has conquered the world."
11. Paul Renner, *Mechanisierte Grafik: Schrift-Typo-Foto-Film-Farbe*. Berlin: Verlag Hermann Reckendorf, 1931, p. 59.

The different ways in which avant-garde artists interpreted the notion of "typophoto" revealed the dividing line between the different modernist currents: on one side were revolutionaries such as Lissitzky, John Heartfield and Jan Tschichold, who saw script as a weapon whose power was multiplied by its combination with photography, and as something to be used to subvert the dominant language and signs; on the other were the "reformists," among them Renner, who sought to draw on the power of tradition embodied in lettering. In this regard, Renner's 1931 publication, *Mechanisierte Grafik*, helped to define these differences. In this book he supported the broad concepts of the New Typography, but in a less ideological and more pragmatic way, without going in for revolutionary overstatement or overestimating the role of photography. He praised the rigorous clarity of its geometrical conceptions of the letter and roman capitals, and said that their geometric construction would be hard to better. However, he also rejected the tendency towards abstraction that Tschichold posited as one of the fundamentals of New Typography, dismissing it as "quite a formalism."[12]

The reception of Futura in France

As early as 1928, Bertrand Guégan wrote a penetrating description of the capacities of Futura in *Arts et Métiers graphiques*:[13] "With *Futura* M. Paul Renner has conceived the ambitious goal of endowing us with 'the character of our times.' […] This sanserif is stylised, free from typographic traditions and adapted to some of our tastes and needs. […] The capitals will be unanimously appreciated for their solidity, their slenderness and their judicious innovations…" At the same time, Guégan noted that "A system developed without moderation can lead to coldness." In other words, this German typography had shown its capacity to affirm its rigour in "catalogue compositions, brochures and poster texts" – that is, in display and signage typefaces suited to "some of our […] needs," but this did not apply to books. "We do not think that this character will ever be used for the printing of books, unless one ignores legibility. A page of Futura is black and handsome but too compact – like the gothics of the fifteenth century!" Return to sender: this was a perfected gothic type designed for German language readers. But this offensive would peter out when the first page of a French book was set in the type.

Writing in *Art et Décoration*,[14] Maximilien Vox, official adviser of Deberny & Peignot, made an implicit reference to Futura in the form of a question: "Will there be, as some claim, a 'character of our times'? In other words, does one form of letter correspond more closely than another both to our cast of mind and to the technical processes of printing today?" By way of an answer, he indicated his own preference: "The script that will dominate, in all conspicuous uses, during the next ten years, will be, not an antiqua, but a derivative of antiqua, a letter of almost perfectly even weight, sanserif (until further notice), but with proportions that are more varied and lively than those of the sanserifs in use before now. There are already numerous versions of this in Germany (Futura, Erbar, Kabel, Elegant, etc.), and one in England, by the sculptor and engraver Eric Gill (Gill sanserif); others are being prepared in France, and are destined for great success." About this typeface that was being prepared, and that

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12. Paul Renner, *op. cit.*, p. 71.
13. Bertrand Guégan, "Le Futura", *Arts et Métiers graphiques* no. 6, 1 July 1928, p. 388.
14. Maximilien Vox, "Typographie," *Art et Décoration*, July 1929.

was capable of hitting the typographic heights, which Vox defined as modern "in all conspicuous uses," he was not very forthcoming, but he did make this rather surprising observation: "France today has no great specialist designers of letters to compare with Koch and Renner and other typographic artists in Germany." The Deberny & Peignot typefoundry had just brought out Bifur by Cassandre, a typeface that had met with a poor response from professionals and critics in general, and Vox apparently concurred with their view while, for the first time in France, lavishing praise on designs from over the Rhine.[15]

In his conclusion, Vox prophesied increasing standardization and growing efforts to impose a dominant type: "It is not impossible that France, home to an innate sense of proportion, should witness the birth of the character of the twentieth century. Everything indicates that it will be a letter with nothing old about it, strict, and somewhat mechanical." Vox maintained a sense of confusion about the nature of this typeface: was it intended for all supports or only for "all conspicuous uses"? Was it universal or based on a national style? His observation concerning typographic design in France, as compared with the flourishing situation in Germany, held out little hope for the revival of national hegemony. He indicated that a typeface was being prepared, but this was a mere declaration of intent, since neither Charles Peignot nor A. M. Cassandre were thinking of going any further in this direction after the failure of Bifur.

Maximilien Vox initiated a credo, which he would continue to propagate for the rest of his life: on one side, a rigorous and disciplined Germanic world (German, and then Swiss), armed for war in practice and equipped with theories that were seductive and, up to a point, valid, and on the other, France (then the "Latin nations"), which could not compete with the Germans on the terrain of order and rationality, but which possessed incomparable spiritual qualities, an "innate sense of proportion," and a "grace" that left the possibility of a "divine surprise."

Europe: a travesty of Futura

Vox's words came with a secret clause, which explains the confusion and hope that they maintained: at his entreaty, the Deberny & Peignot typefoundry was in the process of buying the rights to Futura for France and in its colonies and other Francophone countries from the Bauer typefoundry. After the failure of Bifur, and in order to meet the increasingly pressing demand for quality alphabets that could perform numerous functions and were in tune with its times, Charles Peignot decided to "call on a foreign character in order to continue and complete the task of renovating the image of the letter in France."[16]

Even if Vox sought to reassure by indicating that this was a measure designed to "offset the provisional absence of a new series" – a series that must needs come from a Frenchman – the fact remained that it could to be taken to indicate subordination to German typography. And this is probably why the name Futura changed to "Europe." There was, it seems, a period of latency between the purchasing of the

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15. The following year *Arts et Métiers graphiques* acknowledged the existence of the New Typography in the form of an article written, illustrated and composed by Jan Tschichold, summing up for French readers the conceptions that he had articulated in his book *Die neue Typographie* (1928): "Qu'est ce que la Nouvelle Typographie," *Arts et Métiers graphiques* no. 19, 15 September 1930.
16. Maximilien Vox, *Divertissements typographiques* no. 4, about Europe, March 1931.

rights, effective dissemination and the launch under this new name. It was only in March 1931 that the fourth in the series of *Divertissements typographiques* was published under the title *L'Europe et le Studio*. One could frame the hypothesis that, during these years, Vox and Peignot were trying out Futura with their clientele in order to define the exact rules of its adaptation. Clearly, much skill was needed to get printers to accept a character that was emblematic of German modernism. How was it possible to talk about Europe without pronouncing the word Futura, or mentioning Renner? How could it be linked with types that were emblematic of the French spirit, notably the pseudo-Garamond put out by the typefoundry in 1927? How could it be assigned descent that was more French than Germanic, with the characters Film and Banjo, which were likened to Europe, and published in 1932 and 1933? Most of all, where on the scale of typographic values could this triumphant alphabet be placed, epitomising as it did modernist geometric solutions, that were antithetical to the idea of gesture as guided by pure intuition and grace?

Vox defined a doctrine for the use of Europe/Futura: geometric sanserifs, of which it was the substratum, were to be limited to display type, and especially work involving photography, and not under any circumstances to be used for running text. In other words, Europe/Futura acquired a particular status: it was an exception that allowed its general deployment in "all conspicuous uses," whereas Paul Renner explicitly created this type as a body type designed to replace all serif typefaces. In the preface to the issue of *Divertissements typographiques* dedicated to Europe, he made it quite clear that this type was used essentially for the combination of typography and photography, and represented the most appropriate display type in this respect. This doctrine become durably established in French typographic practice.

It was now that *Arts et Métiers graphiques* began to take a close interest in the rise of photography. Its March 1930 issue was wholly given over to the subject,[17] and offered an international panorama of the experiments being made by the proponents of the New Vision, most of whom, like Moholy-Nagy, Max Burchartz, Herbert Bayer, Pierre Boucher and Roger Parry, made use of typophoto. This special issue had considerable impact and its unhoped-for success – *Arts et Métiers graphiques* was in serious financial difficulty at the time – led to the publication of a series of annuals titled *Photographie*, the last one of which came out in 1940. The foundation of the Deberny & Peignot studio also contributed to this growth of the photography market, as encouraged by *Arts et Métiers graphiques*. Starting in 1930, this studio directed by Maurice Tabard worked in publishing and advertising. The first issue of *Photographie* devoted eight pages to Tabard's work, but also advertisements produced by the Deberny & Peignot studio. Tabard, with his assistants, Roger Parry and Emeric Feher, and with Maurice Cloche in charge of graphic design and typography, won the studio an international reputation with the mastery of light and use of the new typophotographic language, and notably by their popularization of Europe/Futura as the privileged typographic partner of photography. Maximilien Vox was closely involved with this work. The publication of Film, a character designed by Marcel Jacno, by Deberny & Peignot, was part of this situation. It was heralded by *Arts et Métiers graphiques* in the following terms: "[This] character has the property of harmonising both with classical series, for which it can provide initials, and with modern series, and especially Europe."[18]

17. "Photographie," *Arts et Métiers graphiques* no. 16, March 1930.
18. "Le Film, nouveau caractère de titre, gravé et fondu par Deberny et Peignot, d'après les dessins de Marcel Jacno," *Arts et Métiers graphiques* no. 38, 15 November 1933.

Vox's Banjo, which was designed to compete with the drawn letter, was also contextualized in relation to Europe: "A joyous character, amusingly imaginative, with which it is literally possible to play: Banjo is 'the smile of Europe'," wrote its designer in the preface to his specimen.

Vox thus maintained a sizeable space that was free for the eventual institution of a body type that would be a pure product of French typography, reflecting its "spirit" and its "taste," outclassing Futura, when the time came, leading to the restoration of French hegemony in this discipline.

This space was particularly well defined because prestigious publications, and not only the designs put out by the Deberny & Peignot studio, were based on the principles laid down by Vox. One example was the brochure published in 1930 to mark the inauguration of the Théâtre Pigalle, a luxurious building by architect Charles Siclis with a façade conceived by the graphic designer Jean Carlu that was a thoroughgoing manifesto of modern architecture. Carlu also did the layout of the brochure, which was in turn a typographic manifesto. Composed in Europe, the text was juxtaposed with full-page photographs of the theatre interior by Germaine Krull. In 1931, Moï Ver published *Paris* at Editions Jeanne Walter, with a preface by Fernand Léger. The cover of this splendid book of photos by the former Bauhaus student and prominent figure in avant-garde cinema and photography had a title in bold capital letters in the Europe typeface. That same year, the Compagnie Parisienne de Distribution d'Electricité (CPDE) published *Électricités*, in which each plate was a photomontage by Man Ray. The cover was decorated simply with a typographic composition in lightface Europe/Futura capitals. Each plate was protected by a sheet of vellum paper on which the title of the book was printed in the same font.

In a word, Europe played its role to perfection. It accompanied photography to emblematic effect, framing the best French work in the medium of the period, and more often in display capitals than in lowercase. But it never appeared as running text, as the man who had conceived this so-called "Europe" has originally intended it to do. What here it perform the role he intended, however, was precisely as the singular accompaniment to photography, where lines were not crossed and genres were not mixed – in contrast to the situation in the more radical developments in typophoto – and where there was no room for abstraction, which would soon become the bugbear of Vox and all the anti-moderns.

Crisis and ideological hardening

As a result of the economic crisis, which began in the United States in 1929 and spread to France in 1931, growing numbers of workers in the applied arts, as well as teachers and critics, became actively opposed to modernism, and notably to its abstract tendencies and taste for simplified form, which were seen as heretical and all the more so in a time of crisis. For them, this modernism meant a rejection of everything that made the French spirit distinctive, from its skilful use of luxury and decoration to its rich crafts traditions; it meant its subservience to the phenomena of standardization and industrial mass production, an area where the Germans and Anglo-Americans had greater expertise. In other words, it meant undercutting a good part of the nation's already threatened exports, in favour of a universal, reductive and imported project.

Detractors of the modern movement set about denigrating "atrocious Cubism." Paul Iribe, in particular, assailed the upholders of "cube Europe" in the name of the Latin tradition. He wrote two pamphlets that caused quite a stir in the world off the decorative arts: *Choix*, in 1930, and *Défense du luxe*, in 1932, published by the printer Draeger, a faithful ally of the Deberny & Peignot typefoundry. In them he called for a new role for craft and argued for the primacy of curves and ornamentation and the return of the arabesque. The modernist front, with the UAM to the fore, was seriously battered by these attacks.[19]

Typographers responded to Iribe's arguments. Maximilien Vox joined with him in relaunching *Témoin*, which in 1933 became a journal of opinion close to the leagues on the far right. As the attack on modernism took a markedly ideological turn, "Judeo-Bolshevik" machinations were held up us the cause of French decadence, as embodied by the modern movement. Practitioners were called on to take position for or against the alliance with foreigners, or the renaissance of the national tradition.

Peignot and Vox did not overtly back one tendency over another, and *Arts et Métiers graphiques* did so even less, but what texts published in the periodical conveyed was that French typography would not yield to foreigners on the basis of the equation "sanserif = gothic = uniformisation = Pan-Germanism." Thus, one of the chief concerns in the early 1930s was to issue a clear reminder of the discipline's scale of values. At the top, the book; at the bottom, urban signage; between the two, periodicals and posters. And, in their immediate vicinity, photography, wood engraving and etching.

Cassandre now abandoned abstraction in order, on the one hand, to return to "popular Cubist" figuration, as epitomised by his huge Dubonnet triptychs, and, on the other, to start developing the type desired by Vox. His research effectively led him to the creation of Peignot, which came to fruition at the Paris Exposition Universelle in 1937. This met the demand for a type that had "nothing old about it," that was "strict, and somewhat mechanical," attempting the unlikely alliance of tradition and modernity, in keeping with the chimerical theory of a return to the original Latin script.

Europe/Futura would nevertheless continue to be used, but always within its assigned limits, where, particularly because of its documentary quality, it benefited from the marked development in the use of photography in scientific and technical books and periodicals. Deberny & Peignot simply marketed the three original fonts under the Europe name while, as of 1931, the Bauer typefoundry began distributing Futura Black in France, presenting a stencil form, followed up by bold, open and italic variants, etc.

As it happened, the prediction contained in the slogan that accompanied the second specimen of Futura published by Bauer –"Die Schrift die Welt eroberte" – actually came true: Futura was sold all over the world and the typefoundry set up branches in New York and Barcelona. And while the Nazis reduced its reach in Germany itself, by imposing a return to gothics, this measure was far from universal, for there were modernists, Goebbels at their head, who manifested their interest in Futura as soon

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19. The Union des Artistes Modernes was founded after the Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes (Paris, 1925), in 1929. Among its members were figures such as A. M. Cassandre, Pierre Chareau, Paul Colin, Le Corbusier, René Herbst, Pierre Jeanneret, Charles Loupot, André Lurçat, Mallet-Stevens, Charles Peignot, Charlotte Perriand, Jean Prouvé, Roger Tallon, and Maximilien Vox.

as they came to power. The German exhibition at the 1933 Milan Triennale, for example, had a section devoted to typographic characters organised by Rudolf Koch and Paul Renner, in which Futura took pride of place, as indicated by its use for a big quotation by Mussolini: "We cannot just rely on the heritage of our fathers, we must also forge a new art." Futura was enthusiastically greeted by Italian designers: Attilio Rossi, publisher of the periodical *Campo Grafico*, launched in that same year of 1933, said that the character was unanimously adopted at the magazine, and it remained in use there until publication ceased in 1939.[20]

Ladislav Sutnar, a member of the Ring, soon began making almost exclusive use of it in his design work, and helped to popularize it in the United States, where he settled in 1939. The Gesellschafts und Wirtschaftsmuseum in Vienna, directed by Otto Neurath, used it for the presentation of its research into statistical information, which became famous under the system name Isotype. Fleeing Austria for London in 1938, Neurath in a sense carried Futura with him in his bags.

In 1941 the Nazis officially abandoned gothics in favour of sanserif characters, and Futura was held up as the best of these. It is well known that Goebbels' men had read Renner attentively, and especially his essay *Kulturbolchewismus?*,[21] and that they drew widely on his arguments to justify their surprising change of tack. In fact, this was due mainly to the ideological expansionism of the National Socialist movement that accompanied its military conquests.

The future of Futura

Immediately after the Second World War, the Bauer typefoundry indicate that Futura was still the most popular of its products. Volkswagen began using it in its international advertising campaigns in the early 1950s. From now on, Futura established itself as a precursor of the current that dominated graphic design and typography through to the 1970s under the name "international typographic style," and that gave birth to Helvetica and Univers, which were inspired in part by the method that led to its creation.

The artist Barbara Kruger thus identified it as one of the key characters of the modernist age and of consumer society at its apogee – as of 1960, it was the most frequently used type in instruction manuals – and she too combined it with photography, albeit in a personal manner that was very different way from what Paul Renner and Maximilien Vox had advocated in the 1930s.

By way of a conclusion to this historical overview, it is interesting to note that the Change is Good studio (Rik Bas Backer and José Soares de Albergaria), which is in charge of the graphic identity of Jeu de Paume, has chosen to base its intervention on

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20. Cf. Carlo Privano, *Campografico 1933-1939*. Milan: Electa, 1983.
21. Paul Renner, *Kulturbolchewismus?*. Zurich: Eugen Rentsch Verlag, 1932. Renner was harassed by the Nazis and stripped of his status as a teacher. He later designed several gothic characters and, when Futura was taken as the example of "normal German script" in 1941, found himself in a position in relation to the regime that was ambiguous to say the least.

Futura. These graphic designers have chosen to go back to the origins, so to speak, of this famous typeface. In other words, to its use in signage and its "stylish" combination with photography. In this regard, the drawing of the character that they have transposed takes into account Paul Renner's early experiments, which were not published by the Bauer typefoundry. This seems a judicious move, for these experiments tested the gestating script on matters of signage and the early conceptions of typophoto.

Translated from French by Charles Penwarden

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