

Type Training Documents

Sarah Klein

Typographic production in Switzerland is a well discussed chapter within the graphic design historiography of the Western world.¹ The work of several generations of graphic designers connected to the so-called “Swiss Style” is regarded as having been highly influential in type design and typography. Given these celebrated achievements, one might well ask just where such comprehensive, yet locally pronounced skills originated?² To what extent did the training these designers received lay the foundations for their outstanding work? How were letterform and type taught at Swiss schools?

In certain cases, the timetables and student records of these schools can tell us whether working with letterform and type was a central competence in their curriculum for graphic design and typography training. [Fig. 39] More often than not, the subject—if taught at all—was integrated into the general “Fachunterricht” or “Grafik.” [Fig. 102] Even when it was declared to be a separate discipline, the subject “Schrift” could imply anything from theory to practice or from historical to contemporary contexts, and could stand for calligraphy, lettering,

typographic sketching, type design, typography, type design history, or assorted other things.

One rather passive approach entailed sample collections of typefaces that had been declared to be excellent. These provided guidance amidst the chaos of styles, promoting a canon of the fonts deemed most important and most useful to the students. [Fig. 107] Such aesthetic aids to orientation were commonly provided by the authorities in different fields of design until the 1960s.³ Josef Müller-Brockmann offers us what is more of an implicit and very reduced sample collection in his book *The Graphic Artist and His Design Problems*, which advertised only one typeface, the Berthold sans serif.⁴

“Typographic sketching” was primarily important for typesetters and was mainly used in the lead typesetting era. The aim was to imitate a typeface as faithfully as possible. The sketch served the typographer as a template for the typesetting. Font, font size, and the line breaks were specified in it. [Fig. 108] In 1980, typographic sketching was still part of some training programs.⁵

In 1944–1945 at the Gewerbeschule der Stadt Winterthur there was a special course for typesetters in which students practiced calligraphy without historical references, using the broad nib pen or the round nib pen. [Fig. 109] Compared to the connected and slanted handwriting that was taught at Swiss primary schools,

apprentice typesetters had to start from scratch with writing exercises using Roman capitals.⁶ Similarly, at the Gewerbeschule Zürich in 1924, the lecturer Gottlieb Wehrli got his students to practice an even, rhythmically harmonious script. [Fig. 110] The fact that there were no word spaces gave the character-filled pages an ornamental look.

Between 1965 and 2000, André Gürtler’s students at the Allgemeine Gewerbeschule (AGS) Basel were assigned tasks in which they had to produce ornamental script, not just with traditional writing tools like pen and brush, but also with experimental techniques, such as by using their fingers. [Fig. 111] To Gürtler, the writing flow, the rhythm, and individual expression were important. Legibility was not a criterion, but pleasure in one’s own work was: “With increasing experimentation, enjoyment of the use of the writing instrument, materials and techniques naturally lead to free calligraphic creativity.”⁷ A few decades earlier, in Basel in the 1930s, Theo Ballmer used calligraphy to let his students experience the history of writing through practice. He had his students reproduce writing styles from different stages of the history of writing according to his specially created templates. In this way, they learned not only the rhythm and flow of writing, but also the characteristics and the development of typefaces and letters. [Figs. 19, 20] It is astonishing that the pointed nib was hardly ever used,

although it forms the basis for Didone, on which the successful Swiss sans serif typefaces Univers and Helvetica are based.⁸

“Lettering” is almost independent of the tool, is designed specifically for very short texts—a letter, a word, more rarely a sentence—and it requires only the characters occurring in that text. Classical applications of lettering are, for example, posters (with text), headlines, book titles, monograms for ex libris, or logotypes for companies. Here, creative power may unfold and rules can be broken. In one course led by Hermann Eidenbenz, for example, unconventional ligatures (connections between letters) were created between the three letters.⁹ [Fig. 112] The fact that the proportions of the letters are not correct, and that the ligatures make them difficult to read, is not a shortcoming here, but an advantage that creates a unique effect and competes for attention. In lettering, a free approach to letterform is practiced, which may deviate from the strict interdependencies by which text typefaces are structured.

In practice, the subject of typography is probably the largest application area of type. In general, this refers to design using ready-made (type) material. This includes the layout of books, brochures, and websites, but also commercial tasks such as business papers and cards. While the scope for designing is relatively large in the macro area of typography, there are clear rules in the micro area.

Reference works such as *Detailtypografie* in the German-speaking world offer orientation for students and professionals.¹⁰ Experimental approaches to typography show teaching examples from the photosetting era.¹¹ [Figs. 113, 114] Whereas Emil Ruder re-enacted historical Bauhaus typesetting to illustrate his article “Zur Bauhaus-Typographie” for the *Typografische Monatsblätter* in 1952. [Fig. 115] It seems likely that he carried out this work together with his students in class, but it is not clear from the text.¹²

This broad spectrum of examples within the supposedly narrow field of type and letterform demonstrates the context in which this field was situated. Although the formally rigorous, so-called “Swiss Style” might suggest that it was preceded by an equally rigorous aesthetic education, the few works by students and their teachers shown here testify to a diversity of forms, aesthetics, and approaches. Whether practical or theoretical, with a sense of history or with a feel for the zeitgeist, education in letterform and type in Switzerland does not seem to have been a stringent and rigorous discipline, but a living craft for which new approaches have been developed at different times and in different places.

- 1 See Kinross 1992: 146–157; chapter “Typography and Typefaces” in Hollis 2006: 197–202; Hollis 1994: 130–137.
- 2 In the introduction to *Swiss Graphic Design*, Hollis lists a handful of rather stereotypical “Swiss” virtues. See Hollis 2006: 9.
- 3 For example, in product design provided by the Schweizerischer Werkbund (SWB); see Hünerwadel 2013.
- 4 See Müller-Brockmann 1961: 25.
- 5 See the advertisement for a new course in *TM* 1980: 152–153.
- 6 Concerning handwriting in primary schools, see “Handwriting Instructions,” in the present volume.
- 7 Gürtler 1997: 175.
- 8 One explanation may be that the pointed nib can absorb significantly less ink than the broad nib. As a result, the writing process is interrupted more often, and a writing rhythm is almost impossible to establish. In addition, the relationship between the thick stroke and the hairline is not dependent on the tool, but is staged artificially, or artistically, by the writer.
- 9 This example is from Magdeburg, Germany, though the teacher in question was trained in Zurich and became a lecturer in Basel in 1940.
- 10 Forssmann & de Jong 2002.
- 11 The “Cours 19” originated in Paris, France. However, Albert Hollenstein, who initiated the course, was trained in Lucerne; Hans Rudolf Lutz (teacher) was trained in Basel and Zurich. See Delamadeleine 2018: 768.
- 12 At the Fachklasse Grafik at the Kunstgewerbeschule Zürich, “Schrift” was introduced as a separate subject only in 1952, and typography even later, in 1957. See the timetables for 1952 and 1957 at the Zürcher Hochschule der Künste, Archive, AB-UAD-00001.

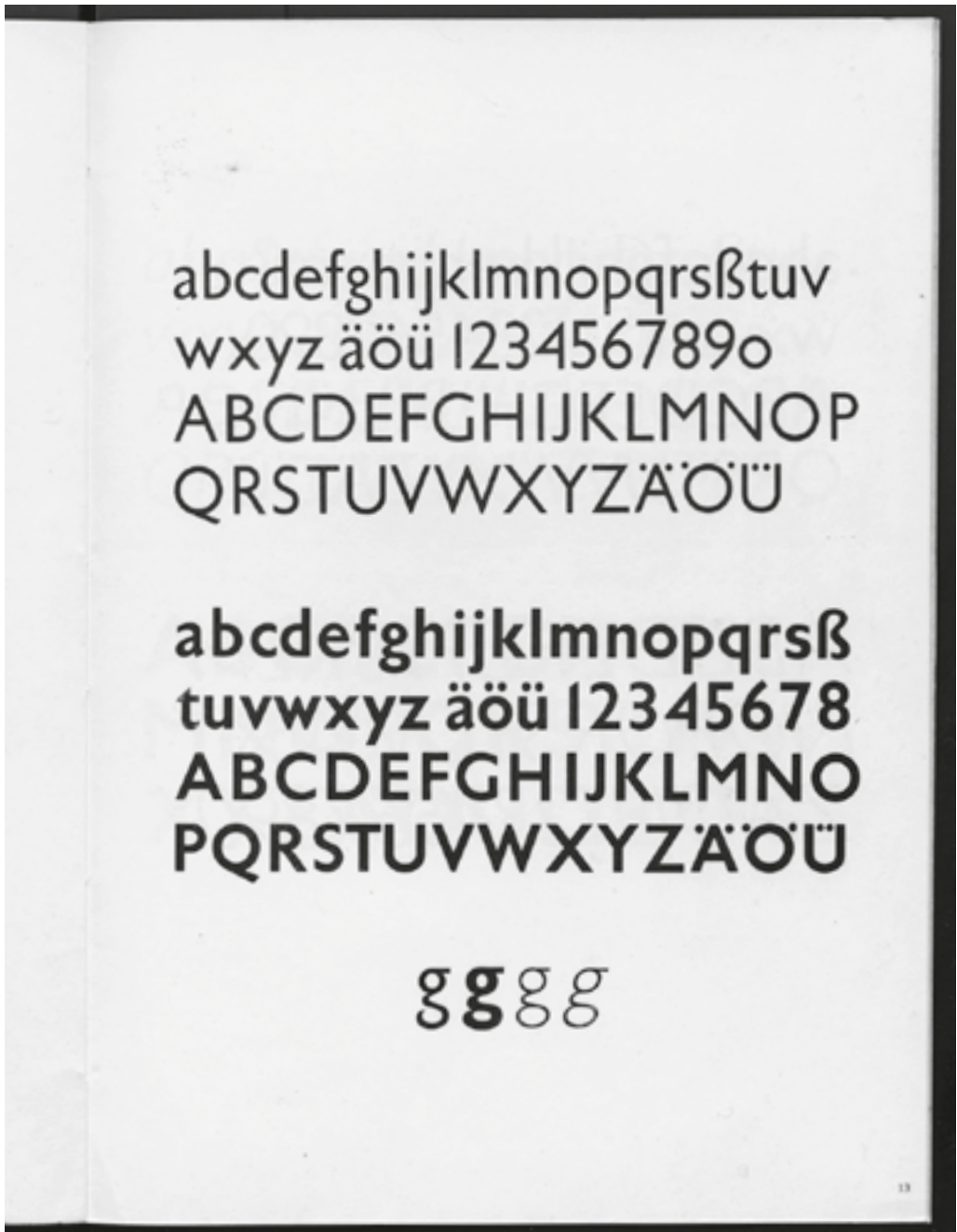


Fig. 107 Jan Tschichold recommending his own typefaces Normale and Halbfette Grotesk, drawn for Uher type, 1933–1936.

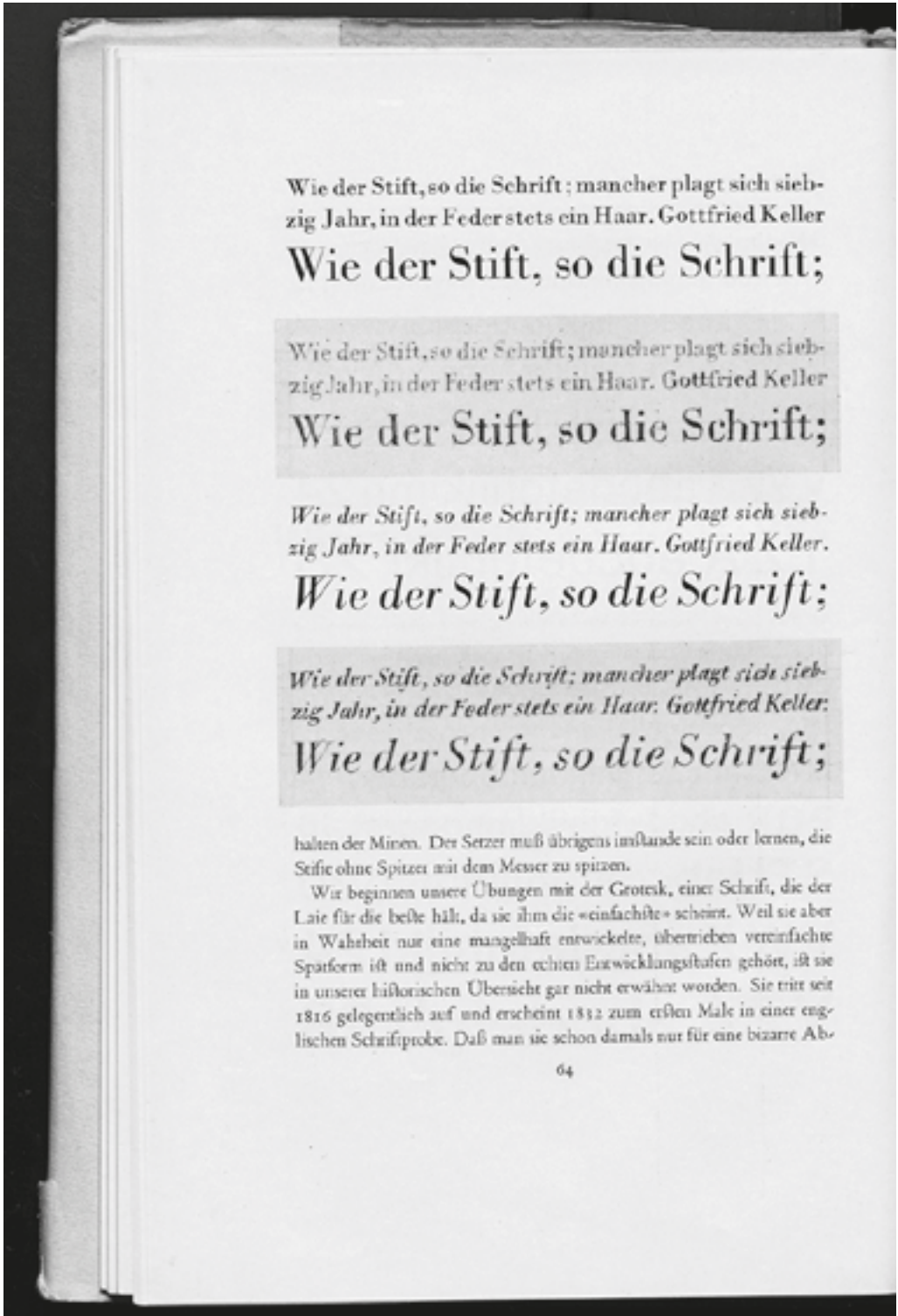


Fig. 108 Typographic sketch of the typeface Garamond, instructed by Jan Tschichold, 1942.

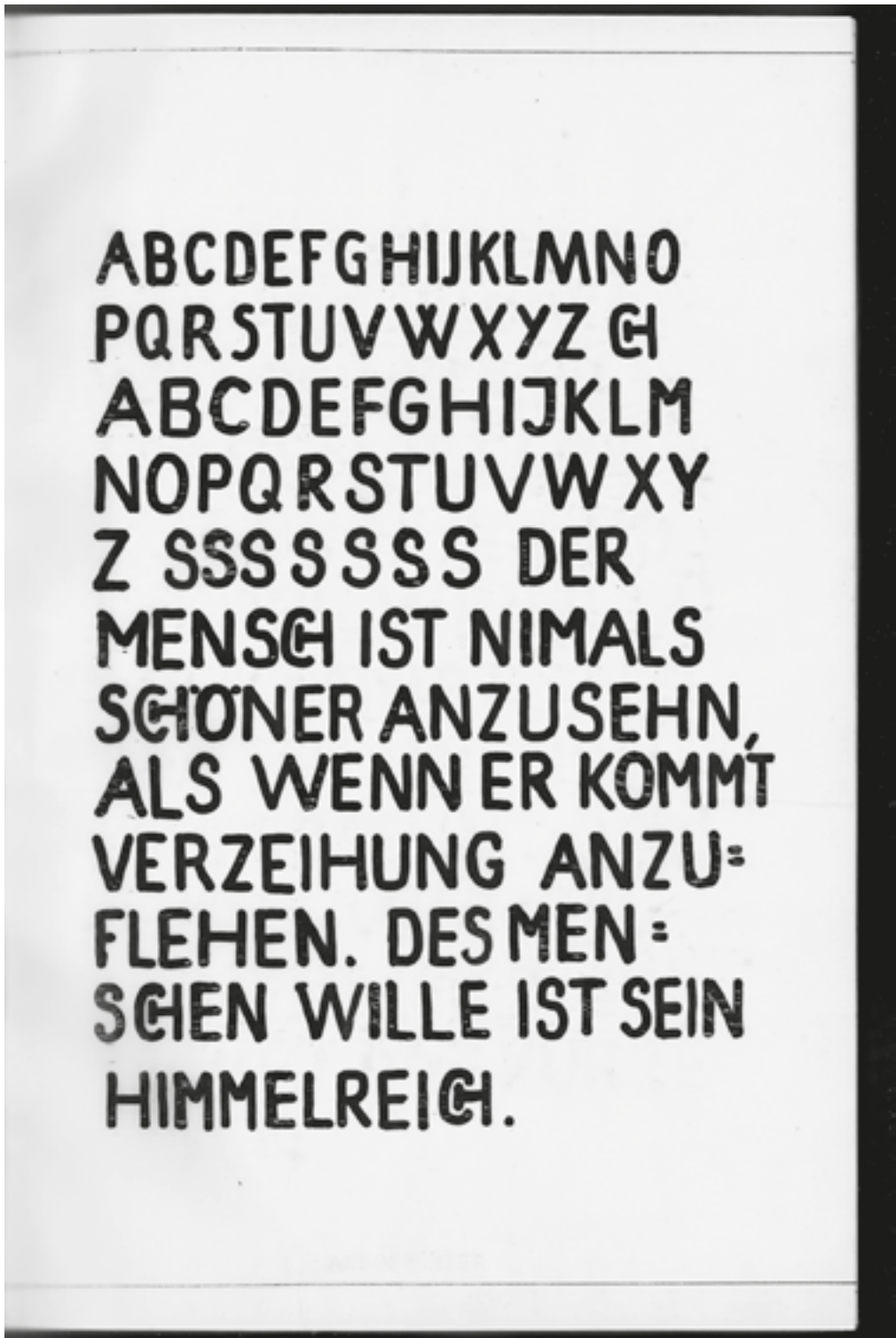
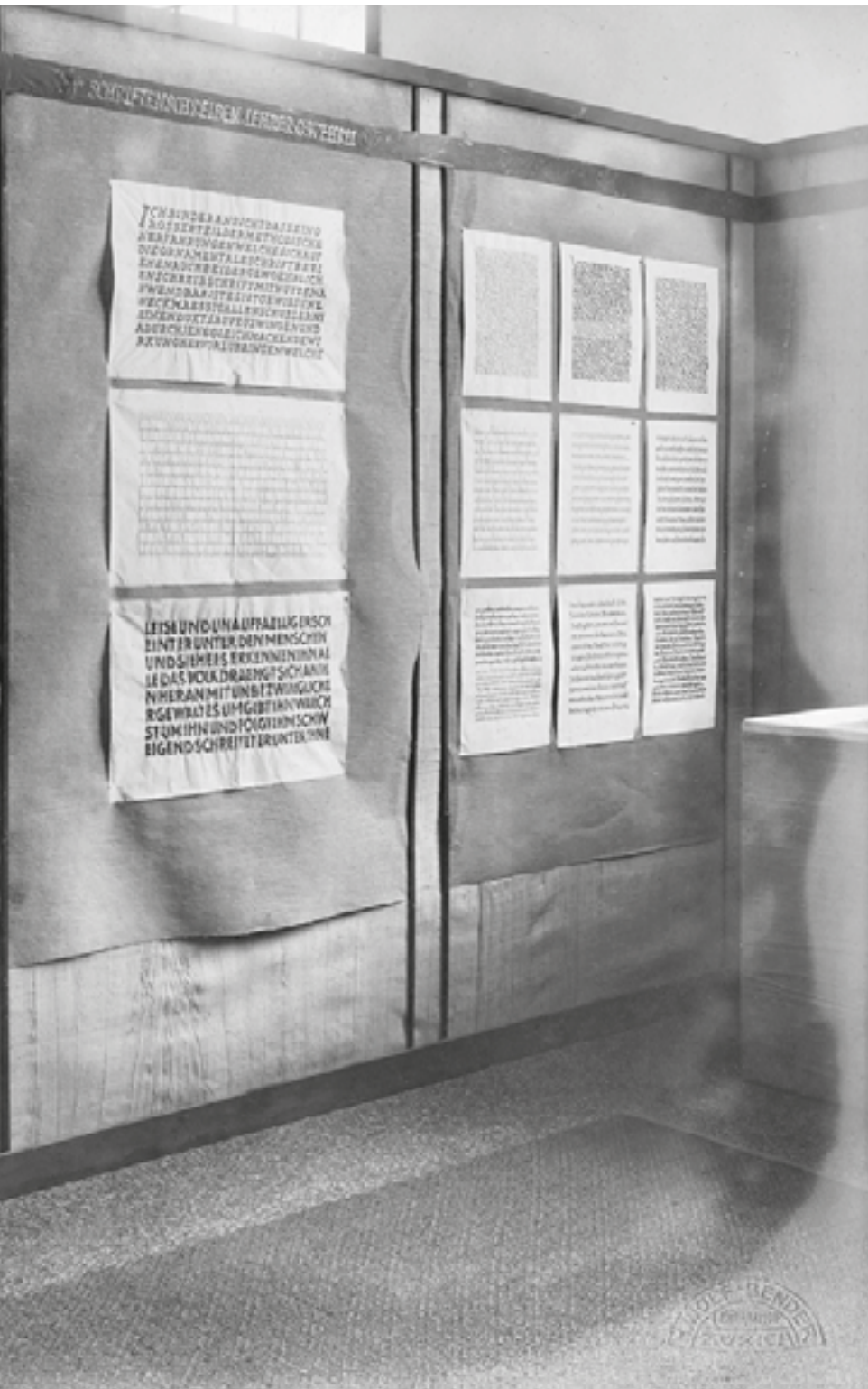


Fig. 109 Calligraphic student work executed with the round nib pen, Armin Müller (student), E. Kässner (teacher), Fachklasse für Schriftsetzer, Gewerbeschule der Stadt Winterthur, 1941-1945.



Fig. 110 Work of Gottlieb Wehrli's calligraphy class in a student exhibition, Kunstgewerbliche Abteilung der Gewerbeschule Zürich, Oct. / Nov. 1924.



JOHANNES
BRUNNEN
ZURICH



Fig. III Student work in experimental expressive calligraphy, André Gürtler (teacher), Schule für Gestaltung Basel, ca. 1997.

Script Images

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Links: Mit dem Finger geschriebene Rhythmen und Formen ergeben durch die eigenwilligen Strichansätze und -ausläufe und den oft überquellenden Strichdruck markante Schriftbilder. Werkzeug: Zeigefinger, Tinte, saugfähiges Papier.

Ein phantastisches zeimografisches Gebilde von Mikrobewegungen, das in strenger Anordnung mit einfacher Strichdifferenzierung eine unerwartete Wirkung erreicht. Werkzeug: Flachpinsel, Tinte, Werkpapier.

An unexpected effect is achieved by the imaginative zeimographic structure of micro-movements, in strict arrangement with highly simplified stroke differences. Instrument: flat brush, Indian ink, mechanical paper.

Az left: Rhythms and forms drawn with the finger produce striking script images owing to individualistic methods of stroke production and the often overflowing stroke ductus. Instrument: index finger, Indian ink, absorbent paper.

Mit zunehmendem Experimentieren wächst der Spass an Werkzeug, Material und Technik und führt ganz natürlich zum freien kalligrafischen Schaffen. Zum Teil hat dieses persönliche Schaffen wenig bis gar nichts mit Schrift zu tun, ausser dass sich die spontane Eigenwilligkeit in der Anordnung rhythmisch schriftbezogen ausdrückt. Das ungebundene Schaffen ist für jene wichtig, die sich als Themen ihrer weiteren Kalligrafie-studien die Semantik oder Poesie vorgenommen haben, wie die nachfolgenden Kapitel zeigen werden.

With increasing experimentation, enjoyment of the use of the writing instrument, materials and techniques naturally leads to free calligraphic creativity. In some ways such personal work has little or nothing to do with script, except that spontaneous individuality is expressed in the arrangement of its rhythmical elements. This free creativity is important for those who have taken on semantics or poetry as themes of their further calligraphic studies, as the following chapters will show.

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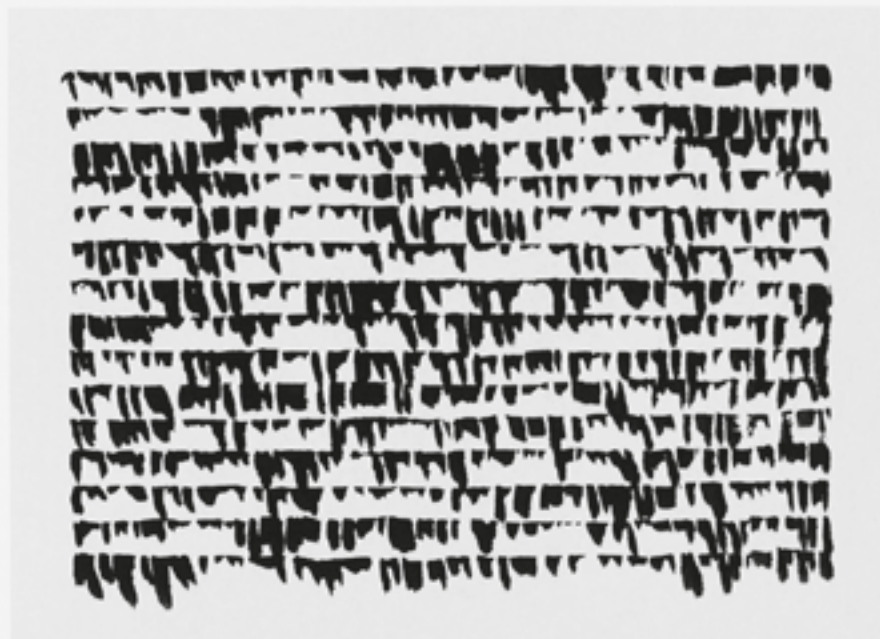




Fig. 112 Student work in lettering, Dirck Ruthmann (student), Hermann Eidenbenz (teacher), Kunstgewerbe- und Handwerkerschule Magdeburg, 1926–1932.



Fig. 113 Phototypesetting exercise of Romy Weber or Ruth Pfalzberger (student), Robert Bächler (teacher), Typo, Satztechnik im Photosatz, Grafikfachklasse Allgemeine Gewerbeschule Basel, 1965-1969.



Fig. 114 Student work with letterform structures presented in course documentation, Jacques Roch and Hans Rudolf Lutz (teachers), Paris, 1965–1966.



Die Meinung, Typographie der Bauhauszeit sei überlebt, überwunden, ist ziemlich weit verbreitet. Stellt man sich aber die Frage: Was ist überlebt? und besonders: Durch was ist diese Typographie widerlegt? so wird eine befriedigende Antwort schwierig. Wenn wir auf den folgenden vier Seiten im Bauhaus erstellte oder von ihm inspirierte Arbeiten zeigen, so denken wir, daß wir wissen, daß die Bestrebungen des Bauhauses heute noch lebendig wirken (New-Bauhaus, Chicago) und daß ihnen in unserer Zeit vermehrte Aufmerksamkeit zukommen. In Europa soll in nächster Zeit in Ulm eine Schule im Sinne des Bauhauses eröffnet werden.

Was bedachte das Bauhaus? Gegründet 1919 in Weimar durch den Architekten Walter Gropius, seit 1925 in Dessau, als „Hochschule für Bau und Gestaltung“, war es die bedeutendste und stark umkämpfte Kunstschule der deutschen Nachkriegszeit. Als Lehrer wirkten Walter Gropius, Wassily Kandinsky, Paul Klee, Lyonel Feininger, Oskar Schlemmer o. a.

Die Ausbildung der Studierenden am Bauhaus erfolgte in theoretischen und praktischen Lehrcursen und in den Werkstätten des Bauhauses. Die Vorleser erstrebte durch analytisches Zeichnen Kenntnis und Beherrschung der abstrakten Formelemente der Gestaltung und durch den Werkstattunterricht und Materialübungen Kenntnis und richtige Behandlung der Werkstoffe. Die Spezialausbildung umfaßte folgende Lehrgänge: Bauzeichnung, Tischlerei, Metallwerkstatt, Wandmalerei, Weberei, Bekleidungs- und Druckerei, Bühne, freie malerische und plastische Gestaltung. Von diesen Gebieten sei die Abteilung Bekleidungs- und Druckerei noch näher betrachtet: Die Werbemittel sind ihre wirksame Anwendung als Inserat, Prospekt, Plakat, Schauloson usw. Die wichtigsten Satz-, Druck-, Reproduktions- und Lichttechniken (Satz und Buchdruck in eigener Werkstatt unter Leitung eines Werkmeisters), Schrift, Zeichnen, Photographie, Werbeplanung, Preisbestimmung, Normung, Maschinen- und Materialkunde.

Zum Kreis der Freunde des Bauhauses, einer internationalen Vereinigung zur Förderung der Bauhausarbeit, zählten die Maler Marc Chagall und Oskar Kokoschka, die Musiker Adolf Busch, Edwin Fischer und Arnold Schönberg, die Dichter Gerhard Hauptmann und Franz Werfel, der Physiker Albert Einstein, die Architekten Peter Behrens und Walter Gropius.

Die Ideologien der ersten Nachkriegsjahre gaben den Impuls zur Gründung des Bauhauses. Zur Überwindung des individualistischen Zerfalls der Künste wurde am Bauhaus der Gedanke einer kommenden neuen Vereinigung verkündigt, einer neuen Architektur, die alle Werkkünste in sich vereinen sollte. Gropius proklamierte Kunst und Technik als „die neue Einheit“, um damit den an sich alten Gedanken einer Architektur als Gesamtkunstwerk eine unserem Zeitalter der Technik gemäße Prägung zu geben. Aus dieser Zusammenhang darf die Typographie nicht herausgenommen werden; sie muß zusammen mit diesen Ideen und Ercheinungen betrachtet werden, in ihrer Zeit eingepflegt, als Teil eines Ganzen. Die starke Wirkung der Bauhaus-Typographie in unserem Tagen beruht wohl zum großen Teil auf diesem Zusammenwirken aller Kräfte. Daraus erklärt sich ihre selbstverständliche Sicherheit, ihre fruchtbare Lebensbejahung, ihr Wagemut, ihre weitgehende, weitgehende Ausschöpfung der typographischen Möglichkeiten.


Emil Ruder: Zur Bauhaus- Typographie

Fig. 115 Re-enactment of Bauhaus typography, Emil Ruder, Allgemeine Gewerbeschule Basel, 1952.

Typographie 1925-1929

vergesellschaftet in den Werkstätten
der Allg. Gewerbeschule Basel.

- a Hans Arp/Walter Clyff: Plakat 1925,
verkleinert nachgesetzt.
- b Typographische Elemente: Linien, Flächen,
Kreise, Punkte, Dreiecke, Pfeile, Raster.
- Alex Jaw Tschichold: Typographische Gestaltung.
Benno Schwabe & Co., Basel, 1925.
- c Kurt Schwitters: Briefumschlag 1928.
- d Walter Sillert: Rechnungsabblatt 1928.
- e Konzertprogramm 1928.



kunsthau^s zürich
abstrakte und
surrealistische malerei
und plastik

6. oktober bis 3. november 1929 täglich geöffnet 10-12 und 2-5 montags geschlossen

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