

Pre-PostModern Swiss Posters



**From the Collection of Aaron Marcus, President
Aaron Marcus and Associates, Inc., Berkeley, California, USA**

Natalie and James Thompson Art Gallery
School of Art and Design, San Jose State University, San Jose, California, USA
17 Nov - 18 Dec 2009, Exhibit Opening Lecture, 17 November 2009

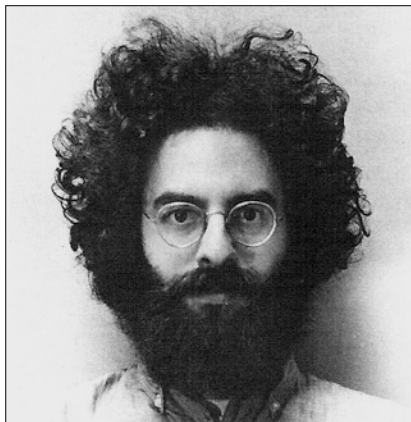
Recreating exhibit in Princeton University Art Museum
Princeton, New Jersey, USA, 5 Nov - 12 Dec 1971

Acknowledgements

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- Swiss Consulate, SF: Consul General Julius Anderegg

Brief History of Acquiring Posters (1969), Exhibiting Them (1971, 2009)

- Omaha → Princeton → Wetzlar, Augsburg → Yale → AT+T Bell Labs → Princeton → Basel → Jerusalem → Honolulu → Berkeley

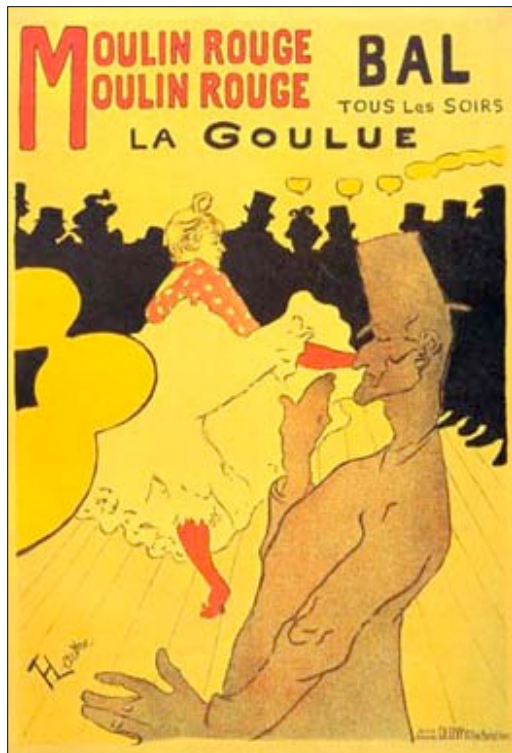


Intro: History of Posters

- 1900s: Poster becomes vital force in visual arts
 - Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, Jules Cheret, Henri Van de Velde, etc.
 - Poster: visual comm medium of shape, color, typography, illustration
 - Emphasis: simple, efficient design for casual, quick viewing
- 1920s: New poster ideas, typefaces, photography
 - Russian/Dutch constructivists Lissitsky, van Doesburg, Zwart, Werkman
 - German Bauhaus artists: Joseph Albers and Herbert Bayer
- 1930s: Bauhaus and modern design emerge
 - Bauhaus international success: machined forms, functional simplicity
 - Artist becomes Designer for modern technological society
- 1940s: Post-Depression/WW2 posters strong again
 - Graphic designer emerges as professional for posters, books, exhibits
 - Mass communication medium, not printmaking by painter, print-maker

1900s Artist-Designers of Posters

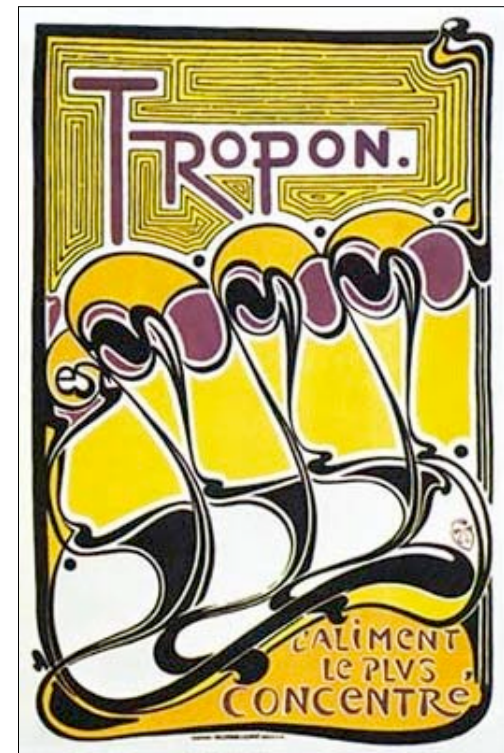
Toulouse-Lautrec



Cheret

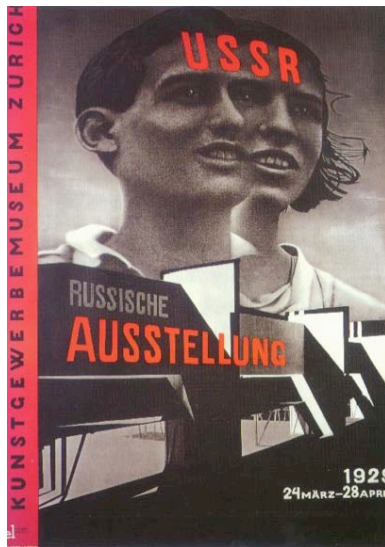


Van de Velde



1920s Constructivists

Lissitzky



van Doesburg

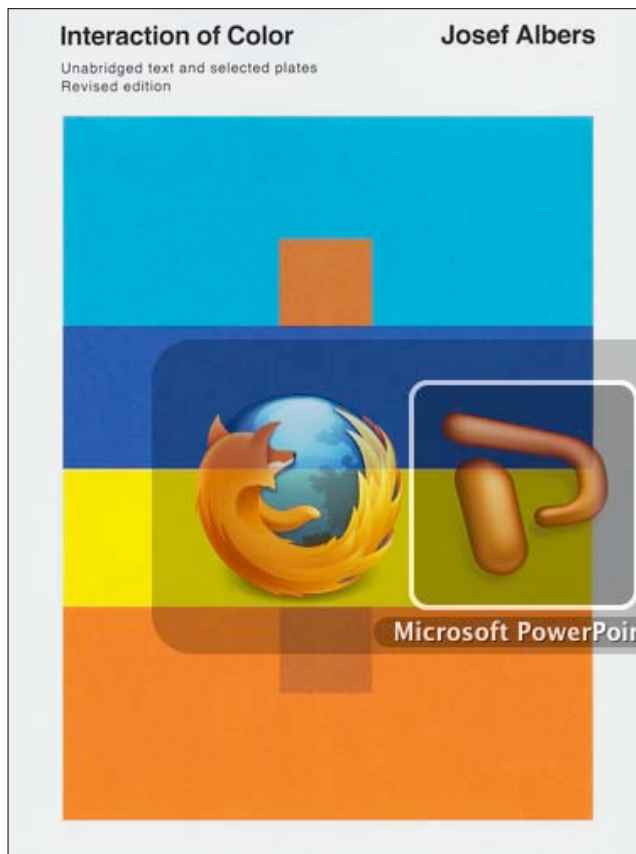


Werkman Zwart



1920s-30s Bauhaus Artist/Designers

Albers



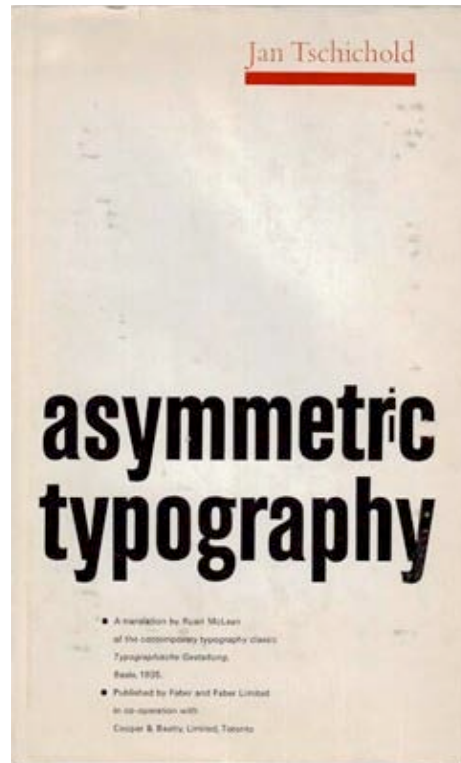
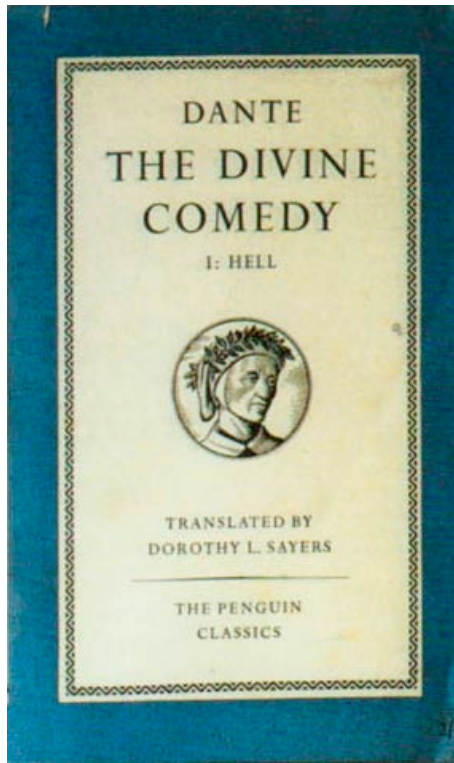
Bayer



Swiss Poster Design: Influence of Bauhaus Aesthetic

- 1935: Typographer Jan Tschihold's *Assymetric Typography*
- Asymmetry, sans-serif type, negative/white space
- 1942: Swiss Ministry of Interior + General Poster Company: National competition built interest
- Standard format: 35 5/8 x 50 3/8", poster kiosks
- Fern: 3 styles emerge
 - Imaginative, amusing, painted illustration: Piatti, Brun, Leupin
 - Moody, surrealist: **Josef Muller-Brockman**, Max Bill
 - **Typographic, geometric, simple, bold: Armin Hofmann**
- 1955-65: Swiss(-German) design-style emerges

Jan Tschichold's *Asymmetric Typography* (Before/After Revolution)

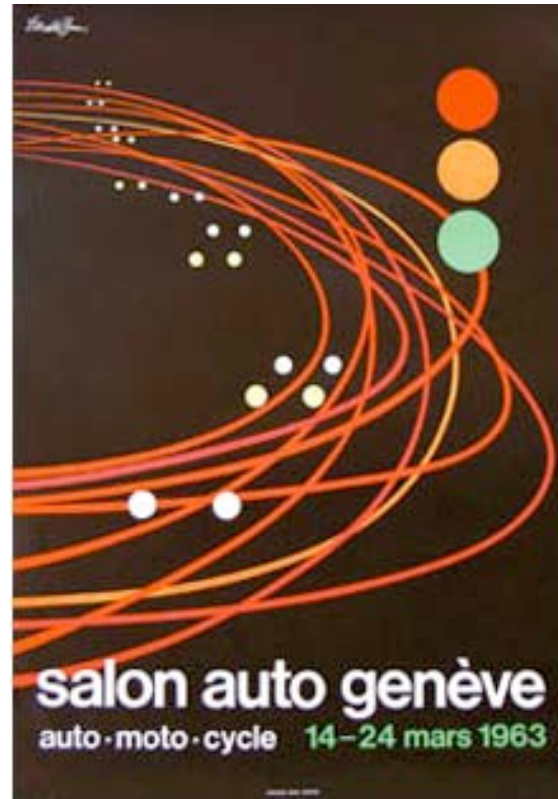
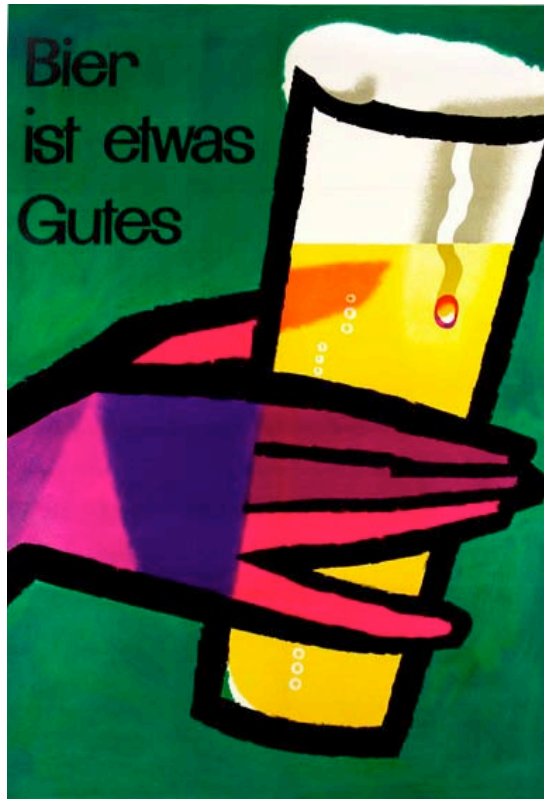


Some Swiss Approaches: Imagination, Amusing Illustration

Piatti

Brun

Leupin



Moody Surrealists (?)

Mueller-Brockman

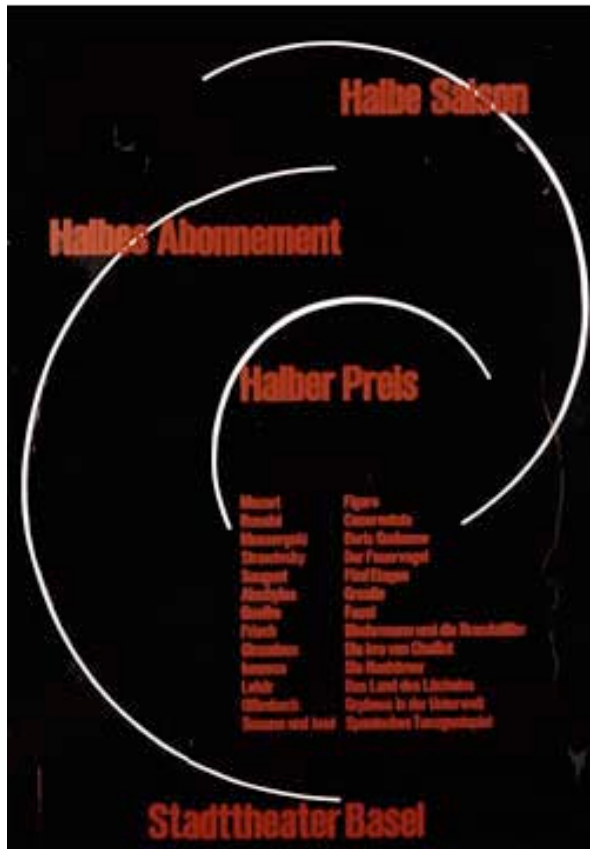


Bill



Typography, Geometry, Simplicity

Hofmann



Hofmann



Swiss Design Principles

- Sans-serif type styles
- Simplified imagery
- Negative space
- Consistency of design

Sans serif and serif letters.



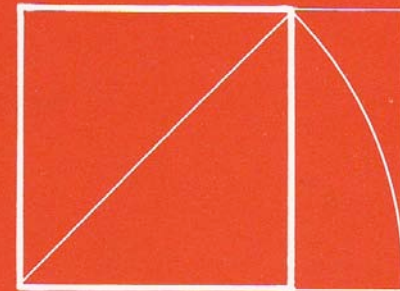
Helvetica and Univers letters.

GtKy GtKy

Heavy, medium, and light letter strokes. Condensed, regular, and extended forms.

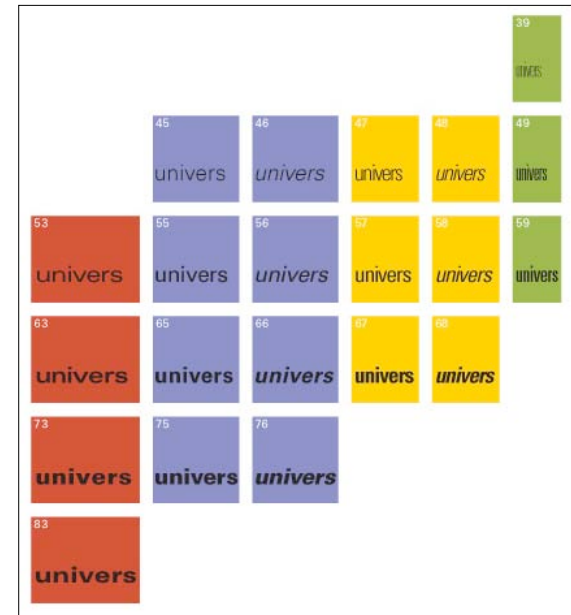


The generating square within a rectangle of the square root of two proportion (1:1.414).



Univers

- Univers 47 Light Condensed
- Univers 55 Medium
- Univers 57 Condensed
- **Univers 67 Bold Condensed**
- **Univers 63 Bold Extended**
- **Univers 73 Black Extended**
- **Univers 85 Extra Black**
- **Univers 93 Extra Black Extended**
- ***Univers 93 Extra Black Extended Oblique (Italic)***



Univers

Simplified Imagery

- Standard format -> impact not from size
- Effectiveness at distance = murals, not paintings
- Impact derives from reduced amount of primary text
- One essential image -> immediate recognition
- Typography alone useful, sufficient to attract eye
- Typography communicates text and abstract meaning
 - Strict typographic designers like Ruder used only type
- Geometrical illustration, large photos, if used at all
- Reduced complexity, flat surfaces, tech-like images
- No hand-drawn images, traces of manual operations

Negative Space

- Carefully used negative space (no text or graphics)
- Establishes geometric subdivisions of poster field
- Provide emphasis for visual element of poster
- Designer must use spatial composition to make information clear and provide background for provocative aesthetic relationships
 - Natural result of fixed format, limited set of typographic elements, often no imagery but type

Consistency of Design

- To achieve simplicity, no mixing of typefaces
- Variations in one type family OK: uniform style
 - Bold, medium; light, condensed, regular, expanded
- Number of changes limited to two or three
- Proportion of changes simple and dramatic
 - Example: 1st to 2nd type size often 2:1 or 3:1
- Strong reliance on spatial grid to organize, control position of type and graphics
 - Grid makes coherent, harmonious visual relations across poster
 - $\sqrt{2}$ (1:1.414) standard poster/paper format becomes basic asymmetric division of square and gnomon
 - Müller-Brockman, etc., use grids to create poster series
 - Grid provides basis for systematic variations

Swiss Design Posters

- Most successful subject matter: concerts, exhibits
- Non-commercialism permitted graphic designers to invent visual symbolism within Swiss formalism
- Müller-Brockman: precise approach makes visual rhythms across/in abstract poster space
- Hofmann: Freer use of photos+abstract forms, humor, lyricism
- M-B, Hofmann, Ruder all published books about their graphic design approach/philosophy
 - All worked/taught in Basel and Zurich

Müller-Brockman: Visual Rhythms, Grids



Swiss Design Publications

Neue
Grafik



Müller-
Brockman



Hofmann



Ruder



Swiss Design Philosophy: Their Explanation, Justification

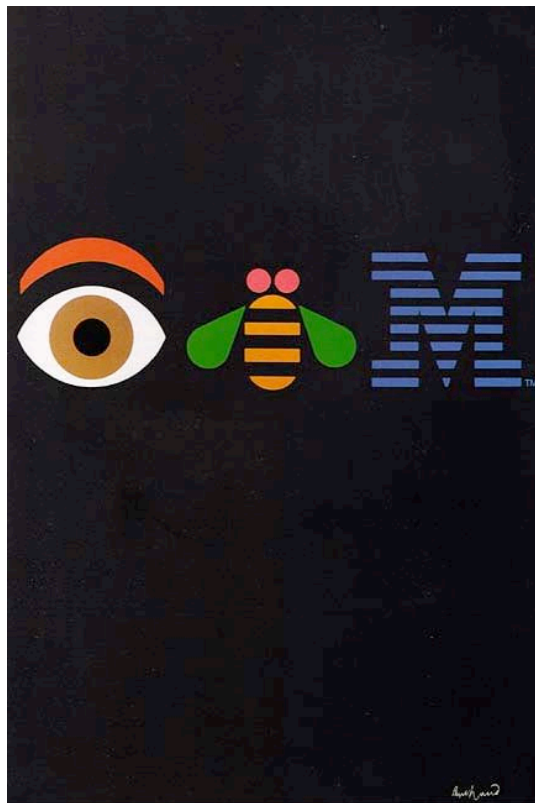
- Restricted system: forms, grid, composition “frees” one from minor element-, placement-decisions
- Simplified imagery reflects rapid pace of modern society, necessity to comm to mass audience
- Greater emphasis on abstract qualities of composition, not relying solely on literal portrayal of objects
- Highest expression: completely typographic poster
 - Only rhythms of color, elements, their sizes, placement of symbols conveys aesthetics
 - Compare: Japanese tradition of black-white water color over color painting

Swiss Design in the USA

- Books, design magazines: Carried Swiss designers' work to UK and USA
- Design schools and design studios that flourished in late 50s, early 60s adopted approach
 - Rand, Chermayeff+Geismar, Anspach Grossman Portugal, Pentagram, *etc.*
 - Yale, Philadelphia College of Art, RISD, SJSU
 - Approach internationalized in museums, theaters, some advertising
 - Opposing philosophy: Push-Pin Studio (Glaser, Chwast), Lubalin, *etc.*
 - Opposites: Apollo vs. Dionysus, Zurich/Basel vs. NY/LasVegas/LA
- Regularity, variation with framework led to widespread success in US corporate graphics

Corporate USA Design in 60-00s

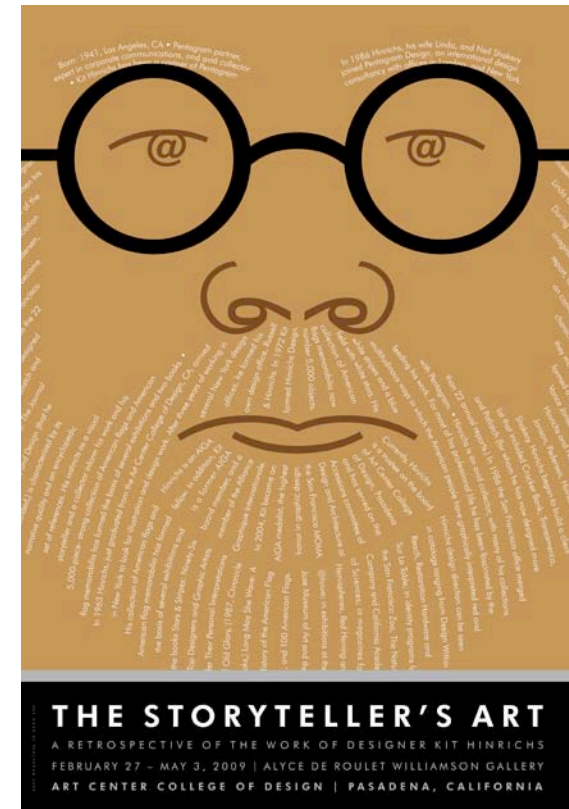
Rand



C+G



Pentagram



Other End of Design-Style Spectrum: Push-Pin, Lubalin, 60-70s

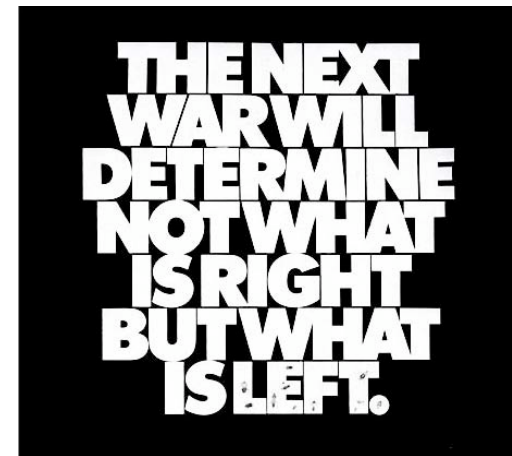
■ Chwast



Glaser



Lubalin



Swiss Design Style Evolution

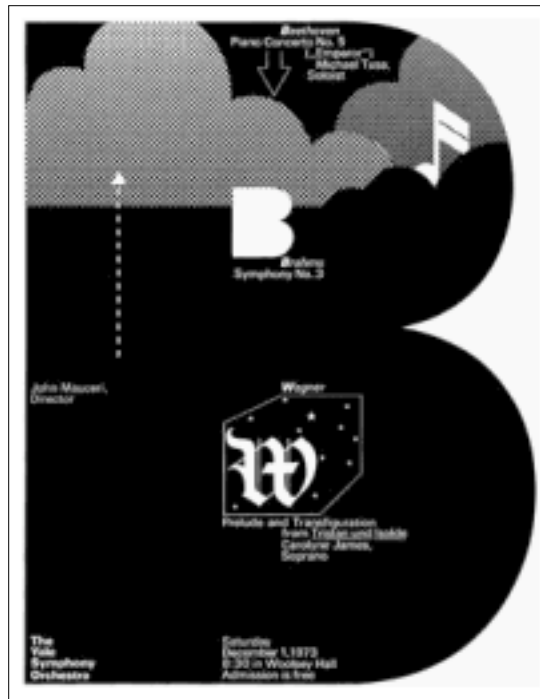
- Swiss design continued to evolve in Switzerland and in USA
- “Exuberance” crept into previous “pure” form
 - Classical forms morphed to “Baroque and Rococco” forms
 - Examples: Wolfgang Weingart, Daniel Friedman, April Greiman
 - New medium of computer graphics enabled easier complexity
- Lasting influence in design schools, corporate communications despite disappearance of founders
 - Emil Ruder died in 1970
 - Armin Hofmann took over as head of Graphic Design Department, Kunstgewerbeschule, Basel, and retired in 1987
 - Josef Müller-Brockman began graphic design work in Zurich in 1930, died in 1996

Examples of “Baroque and Rococco” Swiss Design

Weingart



Friedman



Greiman



Swiss Design Lives On...

- Target advertising flyer, October 2009



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