just my type...

bauhaus

special edition

issue n°07

A BRIEF HISTORY

The Bauhaus movement began in Weimar, Germany in 1919. The school in Weimer was established by the architect Walter Gropius. In 1925, the school relocated to Dessau and then moved again in 1932 to Berlin (History.com Editors, 2018). Different artistic disciplines were brought together with a diverse curriculum, including carpentry, metal, pottery, stained glass, wall painting, weaving, graphics, and typography (Google, 2019). This important movement in art and design advocated for a simplified geometric style that is both practical and visually pleasing (Moriarty, 2016). The Bauhaus stood by the principle that form follows function (Moriarty, 2016). It sought to equip young designers with a variety of skills needed in the technologically advancing modern world (Bauhaus Kooperation, n.d.). Though the Bauhaus officially closed in 1933 due to the political climate in Germany, teachers and students of the school kept the vision alive around the world (Google, 2019). In the short period the school was active, it associated with some of the most prominent artists and designers in history (Bauhaus Kooperation, n.d.).

1919 - 1933

Schleifer, F. (2010, May 27). *Bauhaus Exhibition, Weimar (1923)* [Digital Image]. Flickriver. https://www.flickriver.com/photos/jumborois/4645276017/
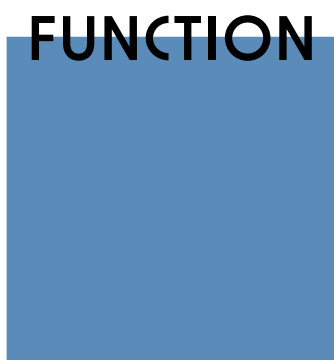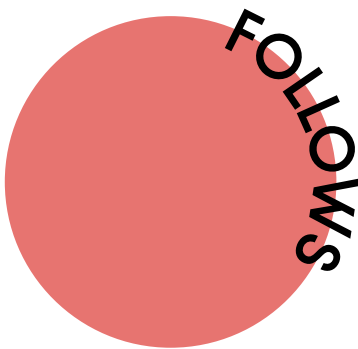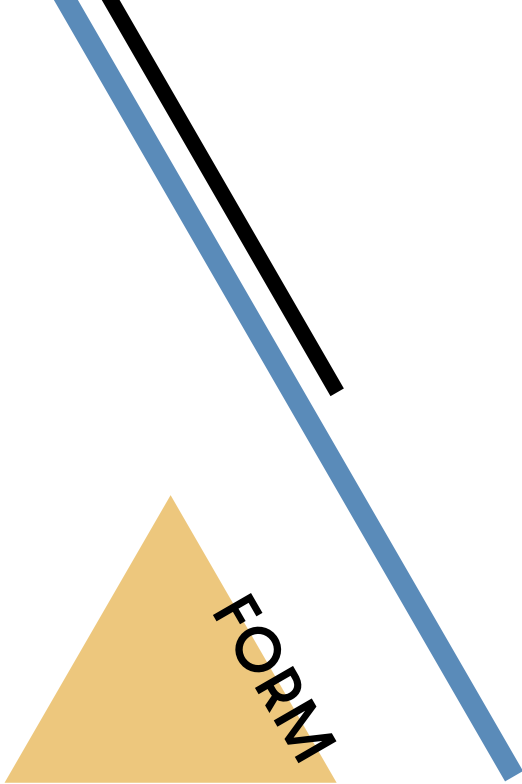
Mäder, T. (2019, November 27). *Bauhaus Dessau* [Photograph]. Flickr. https://www.flickr.com/photos/163689860@N02/49134127401/in/pool-the_real_bauhaus/

FORM

FOLLOWS

FUNCTION

— LOUIS H. SULLIVAN

The Bauhaus embraced and encouraged the shift to more modern design (Leigh, 2019). In style, they are notable for using primary colours, distinctive collage techniques, bold layouts without formal grids, and clean geometric typography (Leigh, 2019). At first, typography was not an important part of the Bauhaus (Winton, 2016). As great designers like Moholy-Nagy and Herbert Bayer worked with typography at the school, it gained recognition and became a characteristic part of the movement and its ideals (Winton, 2016). Typography served as both a functional way to communicate and a creative endeavour for the institution (Winton, 2016). The objective was for typography to be as clear as possible (Winton, 2016). The sans serif typefaces became synonymous with the school through its common appearance in Bauhaus design (Winton, 2016).

László Moholy-Nagy

"It must be clear communication in its most vivid form."

— László Moholy-Nagy (Bayer, 1938, p. 80)

László Moholy-Nagy was one of the leading members of the Bauhaus and taught as a professor at the school (Moriarty, 2016). At the Bauhaus, he advocated for a design process that involves multiple disciplines (Moriarty, 2016). As an artist who was proficient in both photography and typography, Moholy-Nagy combined the two in what he called *typophoto* (Moriarty, 2016). This can be seen as the beginning of the graphic design style we have today (Moriarty, 2016). Moholy-Nagy was able to create compelling compositions with a mix of dynamic typography and eye-catching images (Bigman, 2018). His expertise in various mediums and inclination to experiment allowed him to progress and create innovative designs (Bigman, 2018).

Moholy-Nagy promoted clarity in communication as the principle quality of modern printing (Bayer, 1938). He believed that new typefaces were needed to complement the development surrounding printing materials, processes, and culture (Bayer, 1938). Letters should not be forced to fit certain shapes but rather designed in a way that makes communication easier to understand (Bayer, 1938). Comprehending printed communication would be far easier if the typography was legible and without unnecessary ornamentation (Bayer, 1938). It is this type that serves a functional role and is suited to modern aesthetics that was Moholy-Nagy's ideal (Bayer, 1938).

Jan Tschichold was introduced to Bauhaus at the school's 1923 exhibition. He had previously studied calligraphy and design and done freelance work as an artist and designer for lettering. Tschichold was captivated by the modern design and became part of the movement. He abandoned traditional typefaces and symmetrical compositions, favouring geometric sans serif typefaces and asymmetrical compositions instead. With his work, he wanted to portray the modern times in design that was functional and aesthetically pleasing that could be made by newer print methods. Tschichold became a prominent figure for modern typographic design with the release of *Elementare Typographie* in the *Typographische Mitteilungen* trade journal and his book, *Die Neue Typographie* (Encyclopaedia Britannica, n.d.). He discussed how type practices could be standardized and helped circulate the ideas of Bauhaus graphic design (Moriarty, 2016).

Jan Tschichold

Tschichold, J. (1927). *Die Frau ohne Namen* [Offset lithograph]. The Museum of Modern Art. https://www.moma.org/calendar/exhibitions/10013?locale=en

Schmidt, J. (1923). *Staatliches Bauhaus Ausstellung* [Lithograph]. The Museum of Modern Art. https://www.moma.org/collection/works/6235

Joost Schmidt is famous for designing the 1923 poster for the Bauhaus Exhibition in Weimar, Germany (Adobe Fonts, n.d.). He played a pivotal role in establishing the design style associated with the Bauhaus (Adobe Fonts, n.d.). Part of his work at the Bauhaus school of design was teaching calligraphy and directing typography in the print workshop (Velimirović, 2016).

In his lettering design course, Schmidt focused on the form of letters and experimented with shape, size, colour, and surface (Bauhaus Kooperation, n.d.). Through his teaching, he inspired a future of typography and design, which is more comprehensive (Bauhaus Kooperation, n.d.).

Joost Schmidt

Typography exercise done by Schmidt's student Friedrich Reimann (Bauhaus Kooperation, n.d.).

Reimann, F. (1932). [Part of a series of 52 exercises – No. 32] [Image]. Bauhaus Kooperation. https://www.bauhauskooperation.com/the-bauhaus/training/curriculum/classes-by-joost-schmidt/

7

Herbert Bayer designed the signature typeface of the Bauhaus (MoMA, n.d.). He first attended the Bauhaus in 1921 as a student and later returned as a teacher with typography as one of his subjects (MoMA, n.d.). Bayer created the Universal Alphabet in 1925 with only lowercase letters (MoMA, n.d.). His proposal of an uncomplicated alphabet with minimalistic letterforms was a stark contrast to the Gothic script that was popular in Germany at the time (Biľak, 2019). He strived to make typography more legible with letters based on simple geometric forms and adequate spacing (Moriarty, 2016).

Bayer (1938) considered lowercase letters to be superfluous in written communication. He maintained that using both lowercase and uppercase letters burdened those who wrote (Bayer, 1938). With solely a lowercase letter alphabet, writing would be a faster and more economical process (Bayer, 1938). Beginning in 1925, the Bauhaus stopped using capital letters and printed with only in lowercase (Bayer, 1938).

ITC Bauhaus is a typeface created later by Ed Benguiat and Victor Caruso, drawing inspiration from Herbert Bayer. The design is notable for the clean look achieved with uncomplicated geometric forms and even strokes (Linotype, n.d.).

> "we do not speak a capital **A** and a small **a**. we need only a single alphabet."
>
> — herbert bayer, 1938, p. 149

Bayer, H. (1925). *Sturm Blond typeface* [Image]. Academic Design.
https://vk.com/wall-106647975_405?z=photo-106647975_404739674%2F41b5a117fdf46ca936

Josef Albers took part in the Bauhaus school as a student and a teacher (Stock-Allen, n.d.). Though primarily a painter, he worked with typography and designed a unique lettering system (Stock-Allen, n.d.). Albers' *Kombinationschrift* alphabet was created using a group of basic shapes that stem from a circle and square (Stock-Allen, n.d.). The modular design was not as legible as Bayer's typeface but still aligned with the principles of the school (Stock-Allen, n.d.). The alphabet was designed for efficiency and appropriate for mass production (Stock-Allen, n.d.).

JOSEF ALBERS
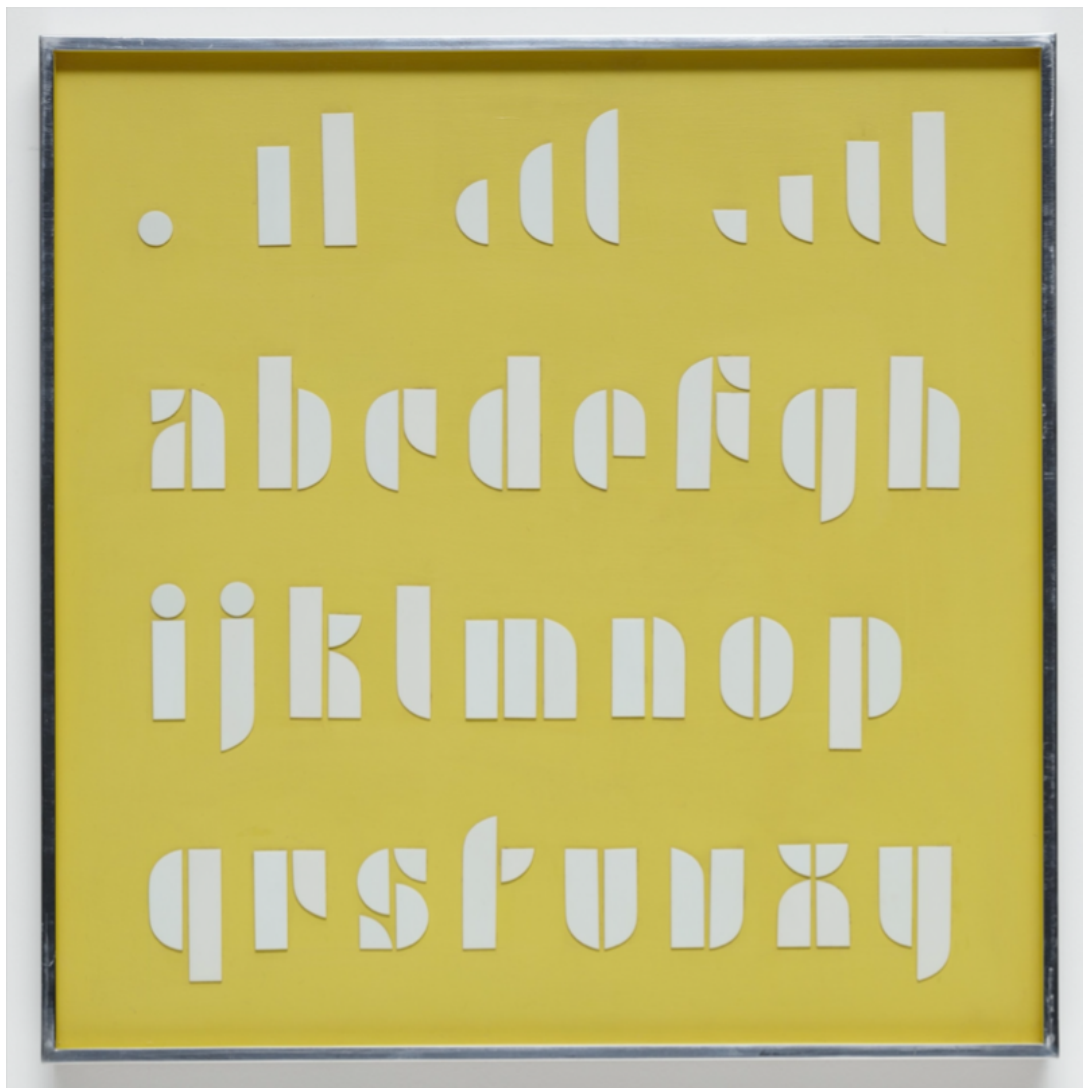
Albers, J. (1926-1928). *Bauhaus Stencil Lettering System (Kombinations-Schrift)* [Milk glass and painted wood]. The Museum of Modern Art. https://www.moma.org/collection/works/2724

LESS

IS

MORE

— Ludwig Mies van der Rohe

Into the Futura . . .

Today, Futura is one of the most commonly used typefaces (Harris, 2017). This geometric sans serif typeface was designed in 1927 by Paul Renner (Penney, 2016). The simple geometries of Futura are based on the style of the Bauhaus (Penney, 2016). While Renner supported the Bauhaus' principles of modern typography, he was not a member of the school (Harris, 2017). Renner rejected the classic type styles and designed Futura based on simple geometric shapes with an overall consistent stroke weight (Penney, 2016).

Futura demonstrates how relevant the design of the Bauhaus is as it incorporates the movement's principles and persists to this day. With the elegant appearance and great legibility of the lettering, Futura has been a popular typeface for many big designs (Kirilov & Petroussenko, 2020). This typeface even made it to the moon in 1969 as the commemorative plaque is written in Futura (Kirilov & Petroussenko, 2020).
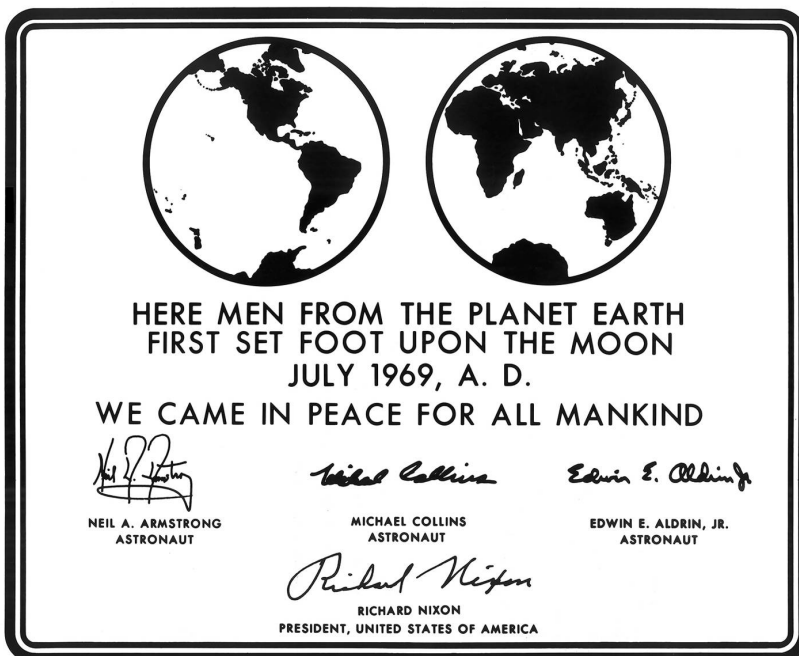
Typeroom. (2019, July 16). *How Apollo 11 launched Futura to the moon* [Digital Image]. https://www.typeroom.eu/article/how-apollo-11-launched-futura-moon

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
0123456789 !@#$%^&*():;"?¿

References

Adobe Fonts. (n.d.). *Joost Schmidt*. https://fonts.adobe.com/designers/joost-schmidt

Bauhaus Kooperation. (n.d.). *Knowledge*. https://www.bauhauskooperation.com/
knowledge/

Bauhaus Kooperation. (n.d.). *Lettering Design*. https://www.bauhauskooperation.com/
the-bauhaus/training/curriculum/classes-by-joost-schmidt/

Bayer, H. (1938). *Bauhaus, 1919-1928*. The Museum of Modern Art. https://
www.moma.org/documents/moma_catalogue_2735_300190238.pdf

Bigman, A. (2018, March 15). *László Moholy-Nagy: Pioneer of graphic design*.
99designs. https://99designs.ca/blog/famous-design/laszlo-moholy-nagy-pioneer-
graphic-design/

Biľak, P. (2019, March 11). *A Brief History of Sans Serif typefaces*. Typotheque. https://
www.typotheque.com/articles/a_brief_history_of_sans_serif_typefaces

Google. (2019, April 12). *100th Anniversary of Bauhaus*. https://www.google.com/
doodles/100th-anniversary-of-bauhaus?hl=en-GB

Harris, M. (2017, October 6). *Here's everything you should know about Futura, on its
90th anniversary*. Digital Arts. https://www.digitalartsonline.co.uk/features/
typography/heres-everything-you-should-know-about-futura-on-its-90th-
anniversary/#3

History.com Editors. (2018, August 21). *Bauhaus*. History. https://www.history.com/
topics/art-history/bauhaus

Kirilov, K., & Petroussenko, N. (2020, May 28). *History and Evolution of Typography*. Fontfabric. https://www.fontfabric.com/blog/history-and-evolution-of-typography-fonts-timeline/

Leigh. (2019, April 3). *Graphic Design: The Bauhaus Style In 2019.* Pixlr Blog. https://blog.pixlr.com/graphic-design-the-bauhaus-style-in-2019/

Linotype. (n.d.). Type Gallery – ITC Bauhaus. https://www.linotype.com/308/itc-bauhaus.html

MoMA. (n.d.). *Herbert Bayer*. https://www.moma.org/artists/399

Moriarty, A. (2016, May 29). *The Modern Letter - The Best of the Bauhaus Typography*. Widewalls. https://www.widewalls.ch/magazine/bauhaus-typography

Penney, M. (2016, June 22). *Type in History: Futura*. Notes on Design. https://www.sessions.edu/notes-on-design/type-in-history-futura/

Stock-Allen, N. (n.d.). *Typography Teachers at the Bauhaus - Experiments in Idealist Typefaces*. Graphic Design History. http://www.designhistory.org/Avant_Garde_pages/BauhausType.html

The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica. (n.d.). *Jan Tschichold*. Encyclopaedia Britannica. https://www.britannica.com/biography/Jan-Tschichold

Velimirović, A. (2016, June 23). *Joost Schmidt*. Widewalls. https://www.widewalls.ch/artists/joost-schmidt

Winton, A. G. (2016, October). *The Bauhaus, 1919–1933*. The Met. https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/bauh/hd_bauh.htm