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# The Swiss Grid

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February 27, 2020–February 14, 2021

**“The grid is as versatile as  
the designer who uses it.”**

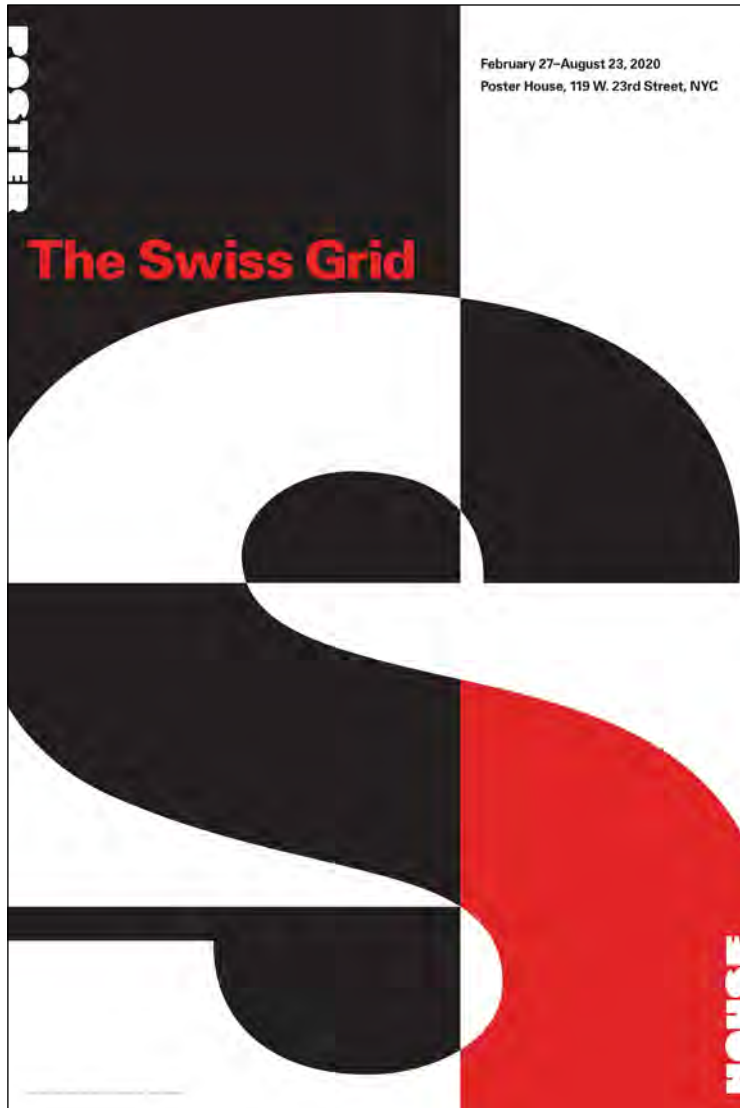
—Steven Heller

## Intro

Since its birth in the early 1950s, no other graphic design tool has had a greater impact than the Swiss grid. Whether adhering to it, playing with it, or decrying it, all styles and movements since then have been responding to this system. Born out of a need for clarity and functionality in a country with four official languages, the grid became a simple way to tackle issues of efficient mass communication. It also avoided referencing stylistic trends traditionally associated with any single country, thus appearing universal, anonymous, and modern. As such, it spread to all aspects of visual messaging, from book layouts to subway signs, posters to instruction manuals.

In a fractured post-war era, the trilingual publications produced by the practitioners of this system spread around the world, becoming touchstones for Modern design. Key designers published their own textbooks and took up teaching positions in Europe, the United States, India, Latin America, Japan, and beyond, ensuring that the next generation of graphic designers was familiar with the flexible grid. Multinational corporations also saw grid-based design as an efficient problem-solving device for the global market, allowing designers to be seen as communication engineers rather than “artists.” While current, more edgy design trends typically depart from this seemingly regimented mid-century outlook on design, the grid remains a go-to tool for corporate and governmental communication, as no other graphic system offers such rational versatility and unpretentious functionality when attempting to reach a mass audience.

This exhibition explores how grid systems were developed—who practiced them, what their actual rules are, and how they became a lasting graphic design phenomenon.



This collection comes to Poster House through a generous loan from Tom Strong.

All ephemera is courtesy of Display, Graphic Design Collection.

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**Special Thanks**

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**Exhibition Poster**

Mike Joyce, 2020

# Before the Grid

Before the development of the grid, Switzerland had already embraced a cohesive aesthetic that set it apart from the rest of Europe. Around 1914, poster sizes within the country were standardized (now known as the *Weltformat* or World Format poster) and rules were introduced establishing where posters could be officially displayed in public. Designers excelled at the classic illustrational poster, promoting tourism through sun-dappled landscapes and products through handsome renderings of goods.

Text was typically expressive and artistically integrated into the compositions. Most posters would also have to be redesigned in one or more of the country's four languages (German, French, Italian, and Romansh) to meet governmental rules on advertising—an artistic challenge as many translated words or phrases took up different quantities of space on a page. By the late 1950s, however, this illustrational style had run its course. Idyllic imagery seemed dishonest in the postwar years, and companies within a newly unified Europe sought to access a growing international market as efficiently and cohesively as possible.





**Turnfest in Basel, 1912**

Eduard Renggli (1863–1921)

*Private Collection, NYC*

- First held in 1832, the Federal Turnfest in Switzerland is the country's largest sporting event, focusing primarily on gymnastics and other athletic feats.
- Renggli's poster shows the wispy, atmospheric treatment of line that dominated Swiss design in the 1910s.



**PKZ, 1919**

Stephan Krotowski (1881–1948)

*Poster House Permanent Collection*

- Like the Turnfest poster on the left, this artist also uses painterly brushstrokes that were a hallmark of early Swiss posters.
- The two men are not only wearing fashions from the PKZ department store, but are also perusing the company's latest catalog.



“Nowhere were the tensions between the ‘illustrational’ and the ‘anonymous’ designers more evident than in Switzerland.”

—Richard Hollis

**Bahnhof Büffet Basel, 1921**

Cuno Amiet (1868–1961)

*Private Collection*

- This poster advertises a restaurant at the Basel railroad station. It would have been displayed on the platform to entice visitors.
- Amiet was a popular Swiss painter who created relatively few posters.
- There is an appreciation of white space in this design that seems to foreshadow similar treatments put forth by designers like Armin Hofmann in the 1960s.





**PKZ, 1923**

Otto Baumberger (1889–1961)

*Poster House Permanent Collection*

- Baumberger is one of Switzerland's most important and prolific graphic designers, creating over 200 posters during his career.
- This poster is a marvelous example of the *Sachplakat* (Object Poster) style in which a product is presented in a simple close-up with little additional visual material. The assumption is that the product can sell itself.
- Baumberger ingeniously uses the tag on the coat to indicate the brand, leaving no need for additional promotional text.



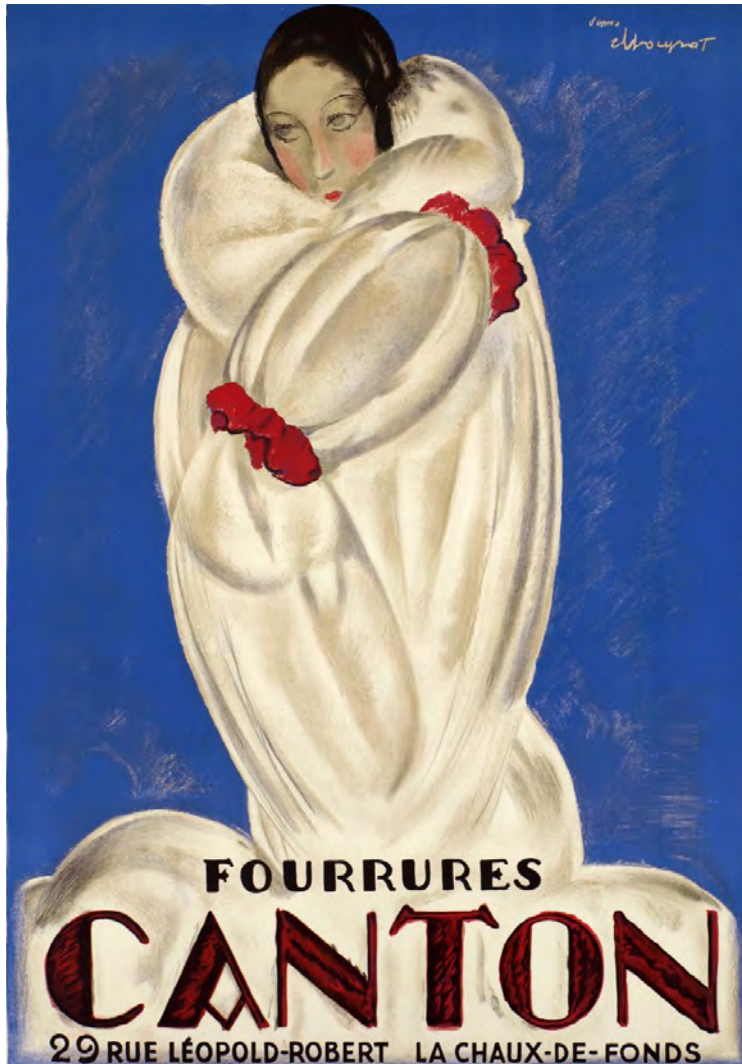


**PKZ, 1924**

A. Ernst Kretschmann (1897–1941)

*Poster House Permanent Collection*

- Primarily a military painter, this is Kretschmann's only known poster.
- Founded in 1881, PKZ was Switzerland's first men's department store and produced some of the best posters within the country. This design is no exception, combining a touch of Art Deco with classic illustrational techniques.



**Canton, 1949**

Charles Loupot (1892–1962)

*Courtesy of Chisholm Larsson Gallery, NYC*

- Loupot is considered one of the greatest Swiss poster illustrators. His designs from this period combine ethereal brushwork with elegant subject matter.
- This is one of three posters he created for Canton, a furrier in Lausanne. The first design appeared in 1924, and it would be reworked every time the company changed its address.



**Genfersee, 1957**

Albert R. Dutoit (b. 19th Century)

*Private Collection, NYC*

- This poster advertises the Lake Geneva steamboat company, CGN, and its six ports around the lake. In the background, one can see Mont-Blanc and the iconic Jet d’Eau.
- Created at the same time as some of the posters in the Swiss Grid exhibition next door, this poster marks a time when some artists were still unsure of or unwilling to convert to a more mathematical approach to modern design.
- This and the poster to the left are smaller than other Swiss posters because they were intended to be displayed outside of Switzerland. Hoardings in the rest of Europe tended to be smaller than the Swiss *Weltformat*, forcing travel-related advertisers in particular to adjust their imagery.



**“In evaluating differences between functional and artistic posters, it is not a question of more or less naturalism, but about whether a certain inner warmth pulses through a poster.”**

—Otto Baumberger

**Zurich, c. 1958**

Max Hunziker (1907–76)

*Private Collection, NYC*

- Best known for his work in stained glass and painting, this is Hunziker’s only known advertising poster.
- Like the image to the right, this poster was produced during a time of dramatic change in the graphic design world. Most “artists” held fast to this type of illustrational composition, while designers, eager to present their craft as a means of problem solving, began moving toward the Swiss Style emerging in Basel and Zürich.



# Why Switzerland?

As a neutral territory, Switzerland was one of the few European countries to emerge relatively unscathed from World War II. Unlike its neighboring countries, its infrastructure had not been destroyed, its citizens had not been witness to mass bloodshed, and its economy had been steadily recovering since the crash in 1929. Foreign artists and innovators saw the country as a haven, taking up teaching positions in Zürich and Basel where their forward-thinking ideas were nurtured. While the rest of the world recovered, Switzerland had the luxury of focusing on cultural growth. The government and professional organizations started sponsoring design competitions like The Best Swiss Poster (established in 1941), touring the winning designs both at home and abroad. Museums hosted exhibitions about new Swiss

design, inviting the artists to lecture and create catalogs and posters for the shows. Design publications like *Graphis* (1944) also flourished, introducing Swiss graphics to the world through trilingual volumes in English, German, and French. Most of the winners of these competitions, as well as the people creating the exhibition posters and new publications, were professors at the two biggest design schools in Switzerland—the Allgemeine Gewerbeschule (later the Schule für Gestaltung) in Basel and the Kunstgewerbeschule in Zürich—where grid-based design was being developed and taught. These numerous outlets allowed this particularly Swiss style to spread and saturate the international design community with unprecedented impact. By the late 1940s, homegrown companies with an eye for the increasingly international market wanted recognizable brand identities that set them apart from the competition. This crisp, easy-to-understand means of communication was at once particularly “Swiss” and adaptable to any country. And so these brands turned to the professors in Zürich and Basel to define a new advertising age.

# Zürich vs. Basel

The Zürich and Basel camps of Swiss design can both be traced back to a single man: Ernst Keller. Teaching at the Kunstgewerbeschule from 1918–56, he is often referred to as the Father of Swiss Style, having directly trained most of the key players who would go on to define this movement. While he did not explicitly promote the use of a grid system, his teaching methods put communication first, focusing on typography over illustration. At the same time, postwar Zürich was a hotbed of artistic activity: Bauhaus students like Max Bill promoted Concrete art that, like DeStijl and Constructivism, emphasized abstract geometry, while Jan Tschichold's highly praised 1928 publication *The New Typography* glorified asymmetry and photomontage in graphic communication. These landmark influences put some of Keller's students in the perfect position to develop a new design tool that stressed clarity and communication over all else: the flexible grid.

While no one person can claim to have invented Swiss style and its underlying grid systems, the two most-noted figures in the field are Josef Müller-Brockmann and Armin Hofmann. Müller-Brockmann quickly opened his own design agency after graduation, and would replace Keller as the head of the design department in Zürich in 1956. He used both outlets to promote grid-based compositions, teaching his students a strict, almost regimented method for properly using them as a design tool. Meanwhile, Hofmann took a position at the Schule für Gestaltung in Basel in 1947. Although also attracted to grid systems, he felt that a designer should still have some freedom, often encouraging his students to play with various grids, even break them a little, in order to find a more harmonious end result. These two artistic giants were neither the first nor the only designers to develop and promote this way of thinking about compositional structure. Other students of Keller's like Hermann Eidenbenz and Richard P. Lohse were experimenting with grids as early as 1947 and 1953 respectively, pre-dating Müller-Brockmann's and Hofmann's efforts. By the mid-1950s, Carlo Vivarelli, Ernst Hiestand, and Hans Neuburg were building on these ideas in Zürich, while Emil Ruder, Max Schmid, Karl Gerstner, Robert Büchler, Fridolin Müller, and Ruth Pfalzberger were adapting grid systems of their own in Basel.

# How It Works

While posters from each school can appear quite similar, designers from Basel typically show a preference for high-contrast photography and more artistically placed lettering, while those from Zürich traditionally use less photography—especially after the 1960s—and adhere to a grid at all times. While Ruder and his students promoted the Univers typeface, both camps leaned heavily on either hand-cut lettering when large type was unavailable or Akzidenz Grotesk. Despite popular myth, Helvetica was not commonly used in posters until the 1980s.

Putting aside these differences, the general concepts behind grid systems in design remain the same. It all begins with planning. What is the problem you need to solve? What is the message you want to present? With those two questions in mind, the designer starts by determining how many fields are needed to compose the appropriate grid. There could be as few as two (by splitting the page in half). They do not all need to be the same size, but the smallest field should correspond to the smallest design element (either text or image). Type and image should never touch, thereby allowing for optimal clarity. Twenty or 32 fields are generally considered to be the ideal number, allowing for ample placement options without creating visual clutter. Each composition, however, is unique and calls for its own grid analysis, forcing the designer to be a mathematician and a visual architect as he builds the page. This rational approach to composition prioritizes clarity of communication—maintaining that clarity through creativity is the art.



**“The grid must be conceived afresh every time so as to meet requirements.”**

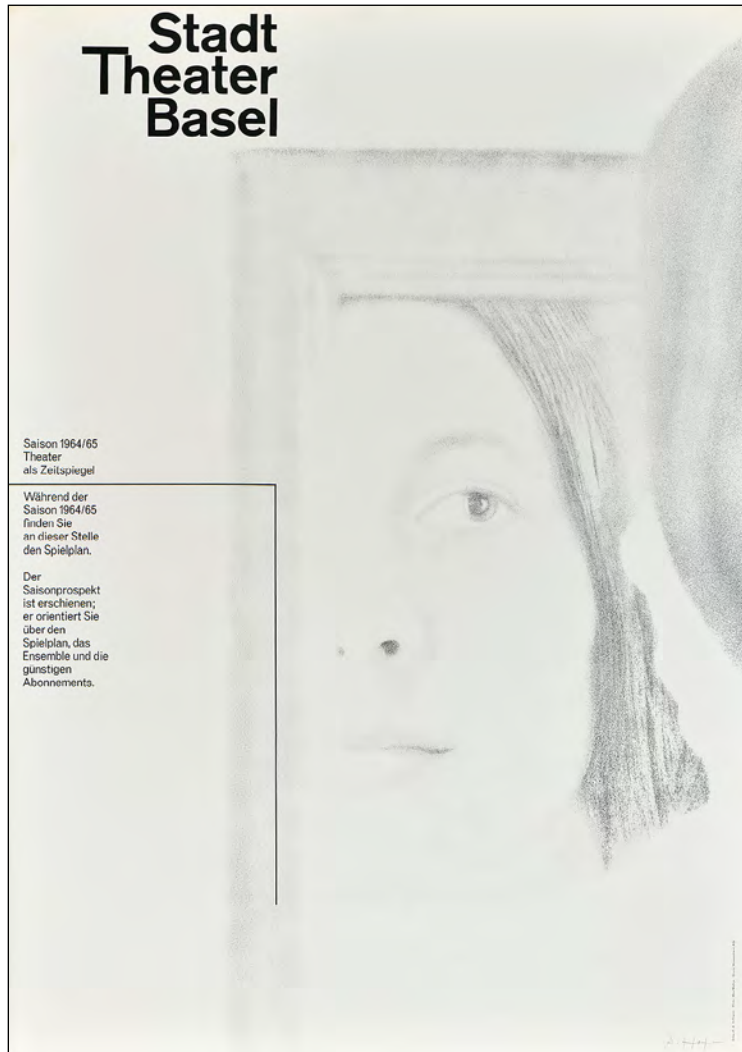
—Josef Müller-Brockmann

**Auch Du Bist Liberal, 1959**

Karl Gerstner (1930–2017)

- This election poster stating “you, too, are liberal,” plays on the 1914 British enlistment poster featuring Lord Kitchener, a pose made iconic by James Montgomery Flagg’s “I Want You” design in 1917.
- The out-of-focus image allows the viewer to imagine a person of any gender in the role, while the use of “du” (a familiar form of “you” reserved primarily for family members) adds an extra element of intimacy to the composition.





### **Stadt Theater Basel, 1964**

Armin Hofmann (b. 1920)

- Hofmann produced numerous posters throughout the 1950s and '60s for the Basel City Theater. The piece on the left is one of his most famous, which he often referred to as his “feets” design.
- The rectangular boxes at the upper right and lower left respectively are demarcated so that a weekly schedule of events can be placed inside them. This allows the poster to remain in use for an entire year, avoiding the cost of designing and printing a new image every few weeks.
- Compositionally, these are some of Hofmann’s most sophisticated designs, deftly displaying contrasting textures and tones in photomontage to demonstrate both the breadth of his skill and the types of entertainment being offered at the theater.

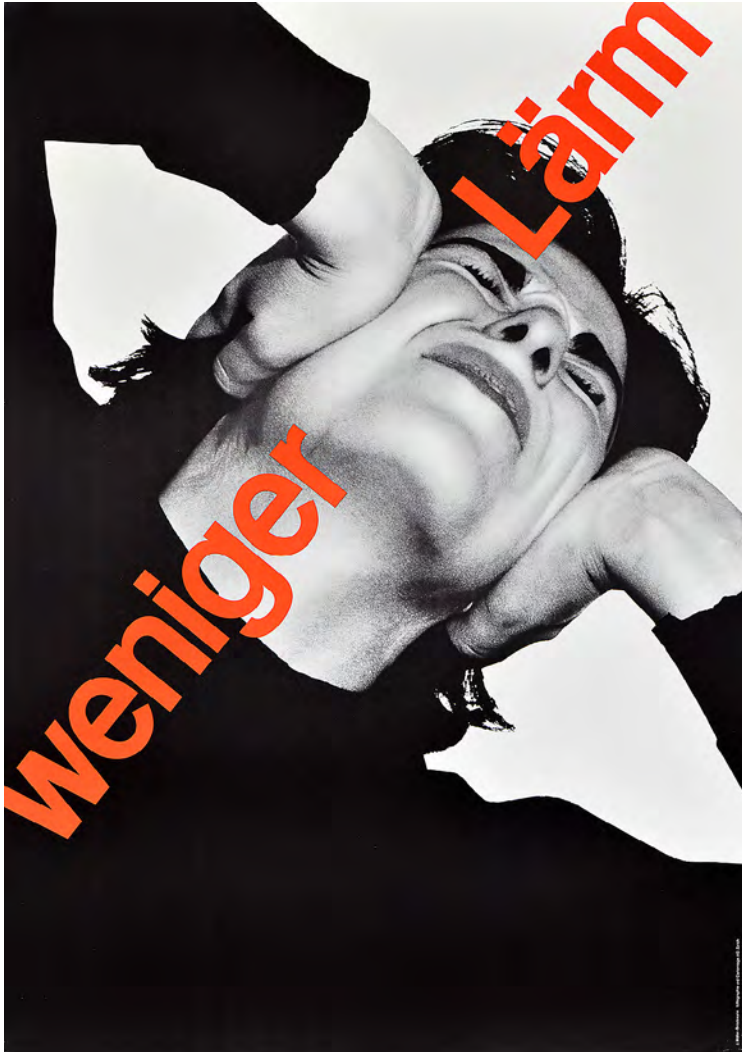


“From the American point of view, it seemed astounding that even ads for ordinary everyday products...operated with a precise concept.”

—Karin Gimmi

**Stadt Theater Basel, 1965**

Armin Hofmann (b. 1920)



### Weniger Lärm, 1960

Josef Müller-Brockmann (1914–96)

- Paid for by the Swiss Committee for Noise Abatement, this photo-offset poster was hung in groupings throughout Zürich, encouraging citizens to be aware of the unpleasantness of noise pollution.
- Between 1947 and 1952, the number of cars doubled in Switzerland, leading to numerous PSAs related to safety and general social courtesy. By the late '50s, aviation and construction noises had also become a major nuisance for city dwellers.
- In this design, the grid has been shifted to 50 degrees, providing a visual tension that not only echoes, but also enhances the message of the poster.



“Swiss design is as much ‘Müller-Brockmann’ as it is any other single personage.”

—Paul Rand

### London Telephone, 1957

Josef Müller-Brockmann (1914–96)

- Printed via photo-offset lithography in three different languages, this poster promotes the London Telephone company as the quickest and cheapest method of communication around the world.
- Some speculate that actual telegram type was enlarged and printed alongside the photo of the telephone operator.



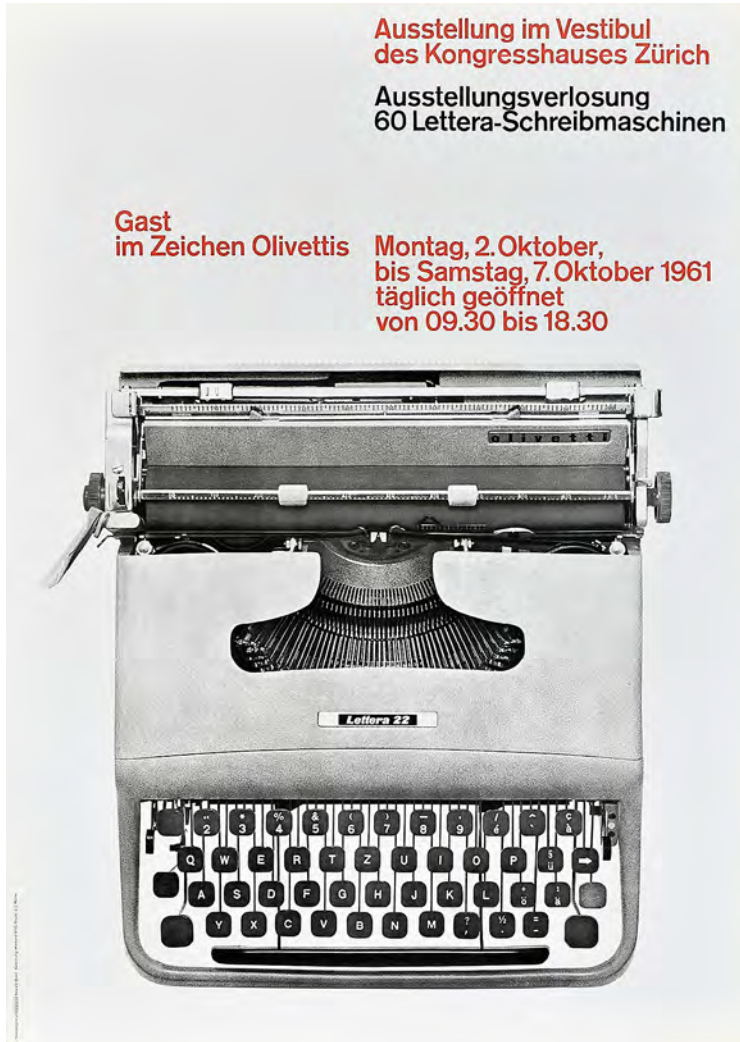


### Citroën, 1958

Karl Gerstner (1930–2017)

Markus Kutter (1925–2005)

- One of many works Gerstner and Kutter would create for the Citroën automotive company, this poster announces an exhibition and competition in which a car is first prize.
- Printed via photo-offset lithography, the red text appears in three different sizes, creating a visual force comparable to the weight of the head-on automobile that grounds the composition.
- Gerstner was especially fond of running certain elements off the page to create impact. Here, the tail of the “1” bleeds to the edge of the paper, while the car is sliced so that its edge runs along the same grid as the body of the number.
- Perhaps inspired by the writings of Max Bill, none of the proper nouns in this poster are capitalized.



## **Olivetti, 1961**

Ernst Hiestand (b. 1935)

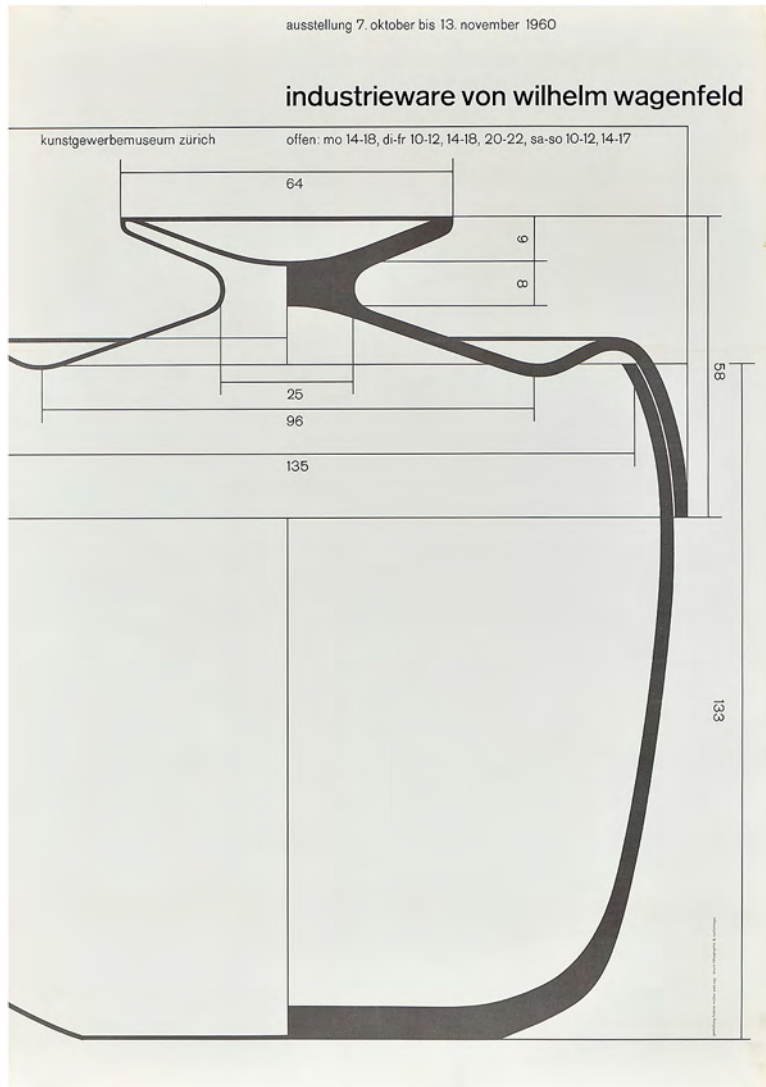
- Two versions of this poster exist: This one, announcing that 60 Olivetti typewriters will be given away as raffle prizes at an exhibition in Zürich, and a more common version that just promotes the brand itself.
- Rather than display the typewriter from the side, Hiestand chose to present it from above, creating a flat plane that emphasizes the geometric layout of the page.
- Fun Fact: The Lettera 22 typewriter was designed by Marcello Nizzoli, the artist who created the Art Deco *Campari* poster in our timeline upstairs!



**Winterhilfe, 1969**

Ruth Pfalzberger (b. 1949)

- This trilingual, photomontage design set in Univers announces an annual winter charity appeal. Founded in 1936, its aim is to help the poor get through the country's harsh winters.
- In photomontage compositions like this, the images were cut out and set on stark white backgrounds prior to printing to make them stand out.



**Industrieware von Wilhelm Wagenfeld, 1960**  
Fridolin Müller (1926–2006)

- This photolithographic poster advertises an exhibition of the work of Wilhelm Wagenfeld, an industrial designer from the Bauhaus school known for his sleek, pared-down home goods.
- The mathematical breakdown of the stove pot also serves to reveal part of the complex underlying grid structure behind the poster.





“It is important to have a process in which logic determines where things are placed. I use the grid because I won’t build a page without first laying the foundation.”

—Jacqueline Casey

### Typographie, 1960

Robert Buechler (1914–2005)

- This poster advertises an exhibition of 50 years of handset typography at the Gewerbemuseum in Basel. Emil Ruder based his design for the exhibition catalog on this image.
- The visual rhythm of this composition is derived from Buechler’s separation of the upper- and lowercase vowels from the consonants, creating groupings that ultimately lead to the letter “t” for typography—the title of the show.
- Set in Akzidenz Grotesk, this poster was printed through linoleum linocut for the main body and metal type for the smaller text at the bottom.





## Musica Viva, 1958

Josef Müller-Brockmann (1914–96)

- Presented in the order in which they were made, these three letterpress posters are part of a series Müller-Brockmann designed for the Zürich Tonhalle. Seen together, they demonstrate the flexibility of the grid system, from a combination of three columns and precisely-measured geometric images to a monolithic block of solid text, to two separate columns of differing weights.
- Staying true to a flexible grid system, the circles in the first poster are all mathematically related.
- The latter two posters (printed two months apart) highlight the title of the series along with the most important performers, emphasizing them through the use of red rather than the music they would be playing. By not using capital letters, the spaces between lines of text and the letterforms themselves (leading and kerning) are more comfortably condensed, creating a weightier block of information. This is underscored by the parentheses which are in a slightly smaller point size than the rest of the text. Most printers would not have had enough wood or plastic type in a single size of Akzidenz Grotesk to create such a word-heavy poster.
- Do you notice a mistake in the printing of the middle poster? In the first line of text, a spacing element in the letterpress process has been accidentally inked, leading to some transfer. This imperfection speaks to the manual nature of this printing process.
- Müller-Brockmann's evolution in style expressed through these three posters was inspired by Vivarelli, who insisted that even geometrical forms could be too subjective and that the information alone could become the image if presented harmoniously.

donnerstag, den 7. januar 1960, 20.15 uhr,  
grosser tonhallesaal, zehntes volkskonzert  
der tonhalle-gesellschaft zürich, als zweites  
konzert im **musica viva**-zyklus  
leitung erich schmid, solisten kurt wolfgang  
senn, orgel, wilhelm walther dicks, bariton,  
kammersprechchor zürich, leitung ellen wid-  
mann und fred barth, tonhalle-orchester,  
st. galler kammerchor, leitung werner heim,  
zürcherische erstauflührungen **klaus huber**  
«litania instrumentalis» (1957) **hans studer**  
orgelkonzert (1951) **wladimir vogel** «jona ging  
doch nach ninive» erster teil des oratoriums  
für bariton, sprecher, kammersprechchor,  
chor und orchester (1957/58)  
karten zu fr. 1.-2.-3.-, tonhallekasse, jecklin,  
hug, kuoni, genossenschaftsbuchhandlung  
depositenkasse oerlikon kreditanstalt

Musica Viva, 1960

Josef Müller-Brockmann (1914–96)

**musica viva**

tonhalle, grosser saal  
donnerstag, 10. märz  
20.15 uhr, 1960  
16. volkskonzert der  
tonhalle-gesellschaft  
zürich  
leitung  
**erich schmid**  
solisten  
**annie laffra**  
violoncello  
**eva maria rogner**  
sopran  
**hans werner henze**  
sonata per archi  
**luigi dallapiccola**  
«concerto per la notte  
di natale dall'anno  
1956» für sopran und  
kammerorchester  
**arthur honegger**  
konzert für violoncello  
und orchester  
**henri dutilleux**  
erste sinfonie  
karten zu fr. 1.-, 2.-, 3.-  
tonhalle, hug, jecklin  
kuoni, dep.kasse oer-  
likon, kreditanstalt

Musica Viva, 1960

Josef Müller-Brockmann (1914–96)



### Sammlung Richard Doetschbenzinger, 1957

Emil Ruder (1914–70)

- Using the simplified outline of an open book as a framing device, this poster advertises an exhibition of East Asian books and miniatures from the collection of Richard Doetschbenzinger, held one year before his death.
- This two-sheet letterpress design was printed through a combination of hand-cut linoleum (the outline of the book and larger text) and metal type (smaller text on the right).



### Schützenfest, 1963

Fridolin Müller (1926–2006)

- Held approximately every five years, a *Schützenfest* is a target-shooting festival in which thousands of young men compete to be the best marksman. As all men in Switzerland must serve in the military, this is considered a national tradition dating back to the Middle Ages.
- Müller's stark composition uses an enlarged black circle to represent both the barrel of a gun and a target—a perfect example of minimal means with maximum expression.
- The poster's simple, direct design meant it could be easily translated into the other main languages of Switzerland without needing to alter the composition.





**Berlin, 1963**

Emil Ruder (1914–70)

- This poster promotes an exhibition about Berlin, “the largest city in Germany.”
- It is a two-sheet, letterpress design with a combination of hand-cut lettering (Berlin), plastic type (the subheading), and metal type (the text at the lower left). The skinny, hyper-extended letterforms in the upper register combined with remarkably tight kerning give the poster a dynamism and sense of energy impossible to impart through metal type alone.



### **Die Zeitung, 1958**

Emil Ruder (1914–70)

- This poster promotes an exhibition of newspaper history at the Gewerbemuseum in Basel.
- Due to the close relationship between museums and schools in Switzerland, this poster would have been executed by Ruder's students as part of an in-class exercise, with each student working on a single element. As the school only had smaller printing presses, the poster is made up of two sheets of paper.
- The giant “z” and the halftone image of the boy are hand-cut into linoleum, while the lower text is a combination of plastic (“die Zeitung”) and metal type. The entire piece is printed via letterpress in one lockup.



“Swiss graphic design is a concept inseparable from the grid.”

—Richard Hollis

### **Medea, 1972**

Josef Müller-Brockmann (1914–96)

- This photo-offset poster combines printed Akzidenz Grotesk type in the upper registers with a giant hand-cut “m” dominating the lower half of the page.
- Müller-Brockmann created dozens of posters for the Zürich Opera House, almost all of which are a simple but effective combination of text and color with no pictorial image. Here, he focuses on a giant lowercase “m” to advertise a production of *Medea*.

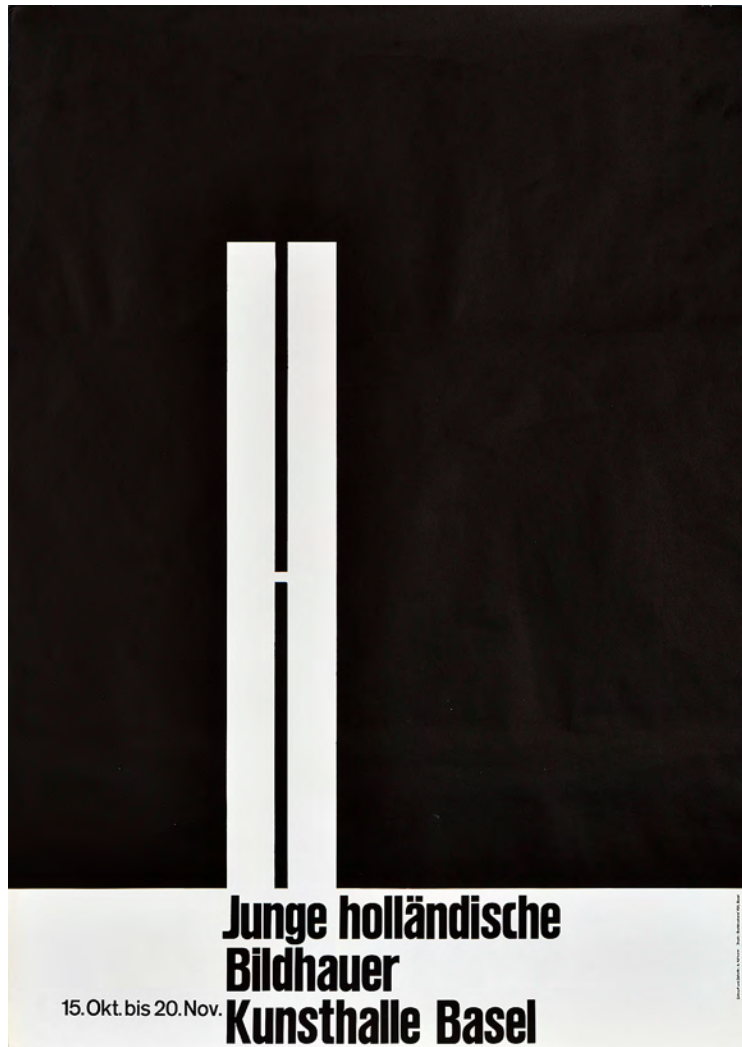


## **Giselle, 1959**

Armin Hofmann (b. 1920)

- One of Hofmann's most iconic designs, this poster promotes an outdoor performance of the ballet *Giselle*.
- This is one of the many instances in which Hofmann breaks from a gridded structure in favor of design sensibility. While the majority of the text mathematically relates to the placement of other elements within the poster, the dot on top of the "i" in the title extends beyond the ascension of the letterforms. It also is round (dots and periods in most sans-serif typefaces at this time are square), cheekily nodding to where the dancer's knee would be and cleverly tying the title to the image.
- The title has most likely been printed from enlarged metal type that has been tightly spaced.
- Hofmann also allows the serif on the number "1" to hang off the grid line so that the body of each number aligns with the letters below, thus creating a more satisfying visual rhythm.
- Printed via photo-offset, the white of this poster is the actual paper. It provides a stark contrast to the gentle halftones of the nearly-abstracted photograph that elegantly suggests movement rather than the presence of a human figure.





**Junge Holländische Bildhauer, 1960**

Armin Hofmann (b. 1920)

- This letterpress poster advertises an exhibition of Dutch sculptors at the Kunsthalle Basel.
- Slight irregularities in the giant “h” indicate that it was hand-cut in linoleum, while the lower text is most likely Haettenschweiler Schmalfette wood type (designed by Walter Haettenschweiler, a student of Ernst Keller, in 1954).



### **Ausstellung Musikinstrumente, 1983**

Richard Paul Lohse (1902–88)

- This poster promoting an exhibition of musical instruments is one of the few designs that breaks from the classic black-white-red color combination that dominates this show.
- The position of the tuba aggressively facing the viewer flattens the instrument and emphasizes its geometric structure.
- Note how Lohse has aligned the hours of the exhibition so that the right side of the numbers are locked to the grid, rather than the more typical left side.

# Breaking the Grid

While the rational orderliness of Swiss Style spread around the world, some designers within the country grew tired of this seemingly rigid approach to graphic composition. Students of mid-century masters like Wolfgang Weingart and Rosmarie Tissi began pushing the limits of flexible grid structures, adding a playfulness and spontaneity to their designs, especially with regard to typography. Others like Niklaus Troxler looked back to illustrational posters of the pre-grid era for inspiration, ignoring mid-century techniques entirely.

By the mid-1970s, a rebellious group of Swiss poster artists were creating experimental images that allowed for fluctuating depth, undulating surfaces, and a rainbow of colors. Still bound to the *Weltformat* size, these new posters are clearly Swiss, but rather than communicating through a system of order and restraint, their imagery explodes off the page, often confounding the eye with a jumble of colorful information. These designers were on the cutting edge of new technology, stretching and blurring text and image through the use of process cameras and, later, through digital software like Photoshop. Where mid-century Swiss posters were quiet, these designs are visual exclamation points.



### Kunstcredit 1982/83, 1983

Wolfgang Weingart (b. 1941)

- Weingart is generally considered to be the leading figure of the “Swiss punk” style of graphic design, continually exploring and expanding the ways in which a poster might effectively express information.
- He studied under Armin Hofmann and Emil Ruder in Basel, focusing primarily on typography—an obsession that would come to dominate his work and of which he would become a modern pioneer.
- This poster advertises an annual exhibition of works that have received the City of Basel Art Credit Grant, a 100-year-old fund for the encouragement and preservation of art from the Basel region.





**A Tribute to the  
Music of Thelonious Monk, 1986**

Niklaus Troxler (b. 1947)

- This poster advertises a Swiss jazz event. Printed in English to appeal to the broadest possible audience, the text wraps around the page to form the profile of the musician Thelonious Monk.
- Troxler claimed that the inspiration for the design came from a desire to visually replicate the musician's song "Round about Midnight," with the flow of the lettering and its rapidly changing colors corresponding to the rhythm of the piece.



**Serenaden 93, 1993**  
 Rosmarie Tissi (b. 1937)

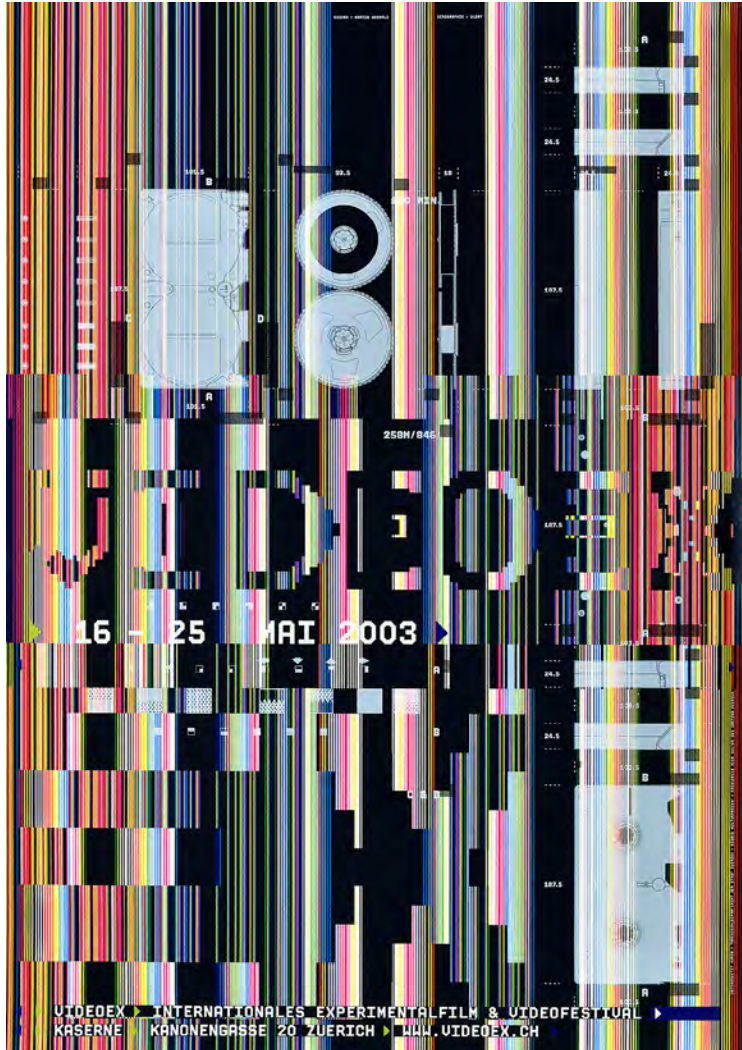
- While Tissi’s early work (on display in the Programs Gallery) demonstrates a strong adherence to grid-based composition, she began departing from such traditional structures in the late 1960s.
- In the 1990s, she started creating posters for the annual open-air “Serenade” concert series in Zürich. Each of these images relies on bold, expansive areas of saturated color, inspired partly by the work of Kandinsky, and a pictorial placement of type that incorporates it as part of the design rather than as a straightforward vehicle for information. Here, a full moon peeks through a cloudy night sky, illuminating the performance listings.



**Consonanze, 2000**

Bruno Monguzzi (b. 1941)

- This poster advertises an exhibition of unlikely paired items on display from the permanent collection of the Museo Cantonale d'Arte in Lugano. Monguzzi's work for the museum over several decades is considered the most inventive and powerful in his graphic oeuvre.
- While Monguzzi was trained by and worked with many of the mid-century Swiss masters, by the 1970s he had begun designing posters which playfully broke from the grid. The haphazard placement of letters in this poster delights the eye, while more practical information about the exhibition is relegated to the left margin.



### VideoEx, 2003

Martin Woodtli (b. 1971)

- Held annually since 1998, VideoEx is Switzerland's only festival dedicated to experimental film.
- This is the first of many posters Woodtli designed for the event, all of which rely heavily on the digital manipulation of detailed compositional layers. His posters often suggest computer screens with malfunctioning programs, perfectly reflecting the high-tech, avant-garde nature of the film festival.
- Woodtli's appreciation for the Swiss masters is best seen in his unique approach to typography. Lettering typically forms the backbone of his posters, pushing the rest of the design to the foreground and forcing the viewer to engage at length with the image in order to receive the information.





**Jazz Festival Schaffhauser, 2003**

Martin Woodtli (b. 1971)

- Like Woodtli's other poster in this exhibition, this design imitates a broken computer screen, resulting in layers of complex information that take time to register.
- He believes he is continuing the work of the Swiss masters, pushing the boundaries of communication within the context of a more contemporary visual language.

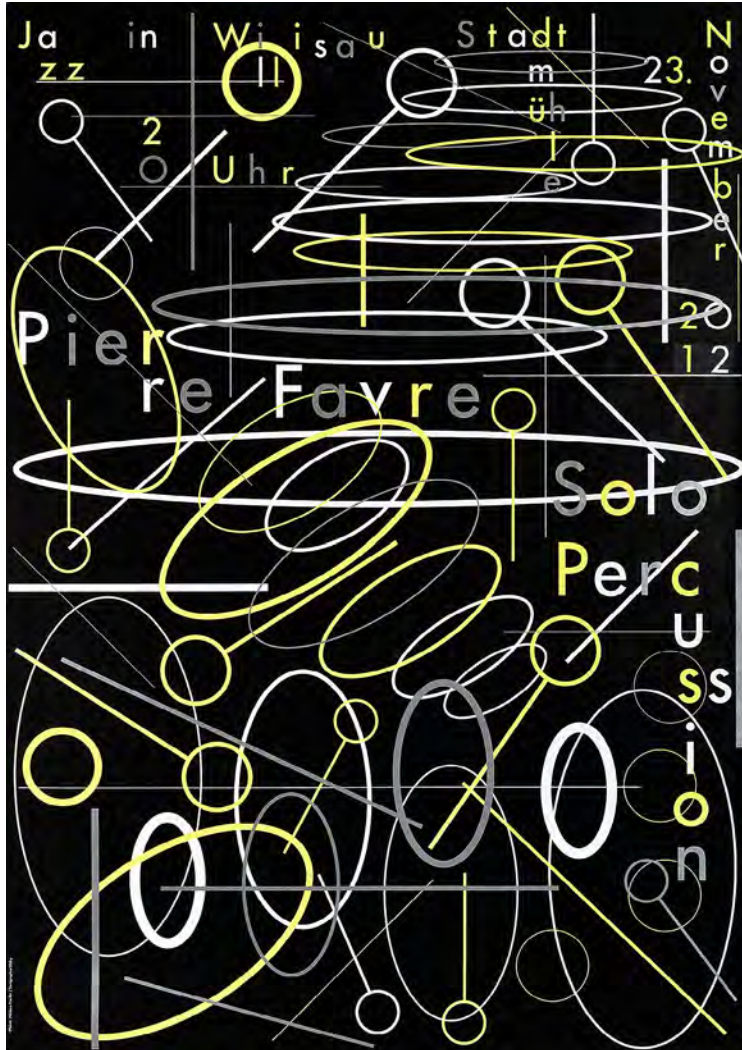


### **17 Schaffhauser Jazz Festival, 2006**

Marc Kappeler (b. 1975)

- Held annually since 1990, the Schaffhauser Jazz Festival is a four-day event celebrating the best jazz in Switzerland.
- This silkscreen design shares a similar aesthetic with Woodtli's poster for the same event, as both embrace a cacophony of visual information to represent an audible medium. Kappeler and Woodtli were part of an artistic collective called *Blech* (independence) in the late 1990s.
- Kappeler is one of the principal founders of Moiré, a graphic design firm that also specializes in type design—a passion evident in the dynamic and architectural letterforms of this poster.





### Jazz in Willisau, 2012

Niklaus Troxler (b. 1947)

- Troxler founded the Willisau Jazz Festival in 1975, and continued as its principal organizer and poster designer through 2009. While he has since transferred the leadership to his nephew, he continues to create all the posters.
- This poster highlights the solo work of Swiss jazz drummer Pierre Favre who revolutionized the use of percussion in jazz composition, elevating it beyond mere rhythm to independent melody.
- Although Troxler was in art school during the time dominated by Swiss Style, he also found inspiration in the work of designers like Herbert Leupin who shunned grid systems. Troxler's posters typically present simplified, playful illustrations with a grid-based backbone.



### Dämonen, 2012

Erich Brechtbühl (b. 1977)

- Written by Sweden's greatest living playwright, Lars Noren, *Demons* presents the progressively hostile interactions between two neighboring couples, culminating in sexual and mental chaos.
- Brechtbühl apprenticed under Niklaus Troxler before founding his own studio, Mixer, in Lucerne. His posters show an interest in manipulating type as the primary pictorial element.











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