



JOSEF MÜLLER-BROCKMANN

Designer's full name: Josef Müller-Brockmann

Designer's pseudonym/nickname: None

Gender: Male

Year Born: 1914

Country Born: Switzerland

Year Died: 1996

Country Died: Switzerland

Religion | Political Alignment: Information unavailable. His work was known to be all over the political/social spectrum, and created with the intention of letting the audience draw their own conclusions and opinions on the matter.

How did any of the above affect either his/her life experience or work because it/they provided a challenge at the time?

None of the above qualities of the designer provided a challenge for the time. His main goal was to keep his work as objective as possible, as he thought subjectiveness was a manipulative practice that distracts from the actual message. “I have never maintained that objective-informative advertising is uplifting. It clearly isn’t like that, but it does reflect an honest attempt to present unmanipulated information to the general public. Subjective interpretation leads to a falsification of the message.”

Did this designer do notable work in fields other than what would TODAY be considered graphic design?

This designer did not do notable work in any field but design. He has written books about his work, but his artistic career only goes as far as the illustration and architecture jobs he had in the early stages of his career. Both of those jobs were ended early due to being fired.

For what is this designer most noted in relation to design? EXPLAIN.

He was most known for creating an entirely new style of graphic design known as the “Swiss style”, which featured easy to read typography on photos, rather than complicated illustrations. This style became popular worldwide, but fell out of popularity around the time of the Vietnam War, as people preferred more comforting designs.

Is there anything controversial about this designer? Explain.

There is nothing notably controversial about this designer. His style seemed to be accepted by the design community.

Explain this designer's education/training, including academic, apprenticeships, and /or mentorships.

Muller-Brockmann had many mentors, including Max Bill, Richard P. Lohse, Hans Neuberg, and Carlo Vivarelli. He went to school at the Zurich Gewerbeschule in Switzerland when he decided to study graphic design.

Did this designer promote a specific ideology in his/her work? Explain.

This designer did not promote a specific ideology in work. He did not want to be subjective, therefore he avoided promoting any specific ideologies in his work, despite what he actually thought in his mind.

Why is this designer viewed as iconic in the history of graphic design?

He was most known for creating the “Swiss style”, which featured easy to read typography on

photos, rather than complicated illustrations. Swiss style was made based on his economic design decisions using grids as guidelines. This style became popular worldwide, but fell out of popularity around the time of the Vietnam War, as people preferred more comforting designs. This style was eventually revived in the early 2000s, and is still inspiring modern design trends today.

Is there any other important information to know about this designer?

No.

Student: Drew Morgan

State and explain the one most important effect that your assigned artist and the quality/importance of his/her work had on the history of graphic design.

The Swiss style is an iconic addition to the world of graphic design that is still present today. It may have had a period of dormancy during the Vietnam War, but it made a strong comeback and has held its place ever since. The style has not only evolved over time, but its influence has spread across generations of artists internationally. Its title as the “Swiss” style is no mistake, as this iconic style from the small country of Switzerland changed the world of advertising forever. One of the great creators behind it is none other than Josef Müller-Brockmann.

His work philosophy was to keep things as objective and functional as possible, which helped give the Swiss style its style. In order to stay clean and functional, he usually kept his process simplified to only photographs and typography on a grid. Das Freundschaftliche Handzeichen from 1955 is a great example of this, as it gets the message across using only one line of text and two photos. This poster serves only the function to tell you its message and nothing else. This work and many others like Beethoven’s Poster show how effective the Swiss style can be. Ernst

Keller, the “Godfather of the Swiss Style”, taught Muller-Brockmann, and Muller-Brockmann eventually became the Father of the Swiss Style himself. Seeing how influential Keller was with this style, the effect was multiplied when other Swiss graphic designers shared their teachings with the same stylistic interests.

Other designers in Switzerland at the time shared a similar style in their work. Armin Hofmann not only mastered this style, but is also known as the greatest teacher of the style to students from all over the world. This helped spread the style to places like the United States. Influence from the new Swiss style was also expressed in areas other than graphic design. Print Advertising, architecture, and all other facets of the art world that Modernism had a hold took interest in the new style, and ran with it. One could say that Modernist design was never the same after the Swiss style took over the world, especially in corporate advertising. Max Bill is known as a contributor to the Swiss style, but it's interesting that unlike the other graphic designers mentioned before, Bill was also a leader in the concrete art movement. With so many like-minded creators in one area, it was only a matter of time they would create something revolutionary together.

The Swiss style spread easily and quickly, given the fact that the creators of it were instructors at multiple art schools in Switzerland. Muller-Brockmann and Hofmann both taught their new creation of the Swiss style at different art schools around Switzerland. Muller-Brockmann taught at the Zurich School of Arts and Crafts, while Armin Hofmann taught at the Basel School of Design. Their students helped continue the Swiss style design trend in their own work. Under the instruction of Josef Muller-Brockmann and Armin Hofmann, great artists such as Inge Druckrey and Robert Probst continued the Swiss style trend internationally in their home land of the United States. Druckrey cites Hoffman and the Swiss style as something that left a lasting impression on her, and changed her in many ways, from her work, to her personal life. Both Druckrey and Probst became educators, and will continue to spread the ideas of the long-lasting style.

The Swiss style is nothing short of iconic and has stood the test of time, evolving through the hand of multiple generations of artists from Switzerland, and across the ocean to the United States. Josef Müller-Brockmann was taught by the best, and with the help of other extremely talented Swiss designers, created something truly extraordinary in the world of graphic design.

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