



JAN TSCHICHOLD

DESIGNER'S FULL NAME: Johannes Tzschichold

GENDER: Male

YEAR BORN: 1902

COUNTRY IN WHICH DESIGNER BORN: Germany

YEAR DIED: 1974

COUNTRY IN WHICH DESIGNER DIED: Switzerla

RACE | ETHNICITY | RELIGION | POLITICAL ALIGNMENT

IF ANY OF THE ABOVE AFFECTED EITHER THE ARTIST'S LIFE EXPERIENCE OR WORK BECAUSE IT/THEY PROVIDED A CHALLENGE AT THE TIME, PLEASE EXPLAIN.

Germany would undergo major political and economic shifts in during his lifetime due to WWI and WWII. The shift into Nazi control would cause Tschichold and his family to flee the country. Jan Tschichold's rebellion against German traditional type and design made him a target for the Nazi party. His work pushed against black-letter, and instead supported sans-serif type, and elementary shape of modern design. His stylistic choices caused the Nazis to arrest him, but he with his family escaped to Switzerland.

LIST AT LEAST ONE OTHER WORK THAT IS NOT NAMED IN THIS TIMELINE FOR WHICH THIS DESIGNER IS WELL KNOWN. IF WORK CO-CREATED, LIST THE OTHERS INVOLVED.

Jan Tschichold worked for Penguin Books for a few years and his book cover designs are very well known. He helped oversee over 500 book developments.

EXPLAIN IF THIS FAME IS ONLY WITHIN DESIGN CIRCLES OR ANY OTHER SUBSET OF THE POPULATION.

Though he was highly regarded in the design and typography world, his work reached to a wide range of the public because of these books. Though the families reading these books may not have been focused on who designed the cover, the covers were still iconic and gave a familiar face to a household name, Penguin Books.

DOES THIS WORK EXEMPLIFY ASPECTS EXPLAINED IN PREVIOUS QUESTIONS?

This work exemplifies the simplicity and lack of ornamentation that Tzchochold promoted. It's simple design was in conflict with German traditional type.

FOR WHAT IS THIS DESIGNER MOST NOTED? EXPLAIN.

Jan Tschichold seemed to have profound influence through his informative writings. Although his style is well known, what stands out is how he was able to articulate his style and typography principles through his books and inserts. He was able to outline fundamental and modern design ideals and gave examples to visually explain them. In doing so, Tschichold was able to influence upcoming designers on a massive scale.

IS THERE ANYTHING CONTROVERSIAL ABOUT THIS DESIGNER? EXPLAIN.

In today's age, Jan Tschichold's designs are not controversial because his influence can be seen in current designer's work. The years he was actively designing held more controversy surrounding him because he lived in Germany during the rise of the Nazi rule. After he visited Bauhaus, his style shifted into the direction of sans-serif and modern design, which the Nazi's considered an affront to their traditional, nationalist ideologies.

WHAT MATERIALS WERE MOST OFTEN USED BY THIS DESIGNER IN THE CREATION AND PRODUCTION OF WORK?

Jan Tschichold often used ink, lithograph, and letterpress on paper.

EXPLAIN THIS DESIGNER'S EDUCATION/TRAINING, INCLUDING ACADEMIC, APPRENTICESHIPS, AND /OR MENTORSHIPS.

Jan Tschichold was introduced to lettering as a young boy because his father was a sign-writer. After studying to be a teacher, Jan later attended the Leipzig Academy of Graphic Arts and Book Production where he studied calligraphy and design. His talent became apparent to the point that his teachers invited him to teach at age 21.

DID THIS DESIGNER PROMOTE A SPECIFIC IDEOLOGY IN HIS/HER WORK? EXPLAIN.

Jan Tschichold changed his ideology throughout his work. He began under the influence and embracing traditional German Blackletter styles. He later changed his style to modernism after being inspired by his visit to the Bauhaus in 1924. It was during this period when he embraced Bauhaus ideology that he wrote what most consider his most influential work *The New Typography*. In this book, he promoted the some of fundamental keystones of modernism such as asymmetric balance, content design around hierarchy, sans-serif type, and strategic white space.

In his later years he returned to a more traditional approach with serif type and symmetrical organization.

WHY IS THIS DESIGNER VIEWED AS ICONIC IN THE HISTORY OF GRAPHIC DESIGN?

Jan Tschichold is viewed as iconic because of his major impact and promotion of modern design. His book *The New Typography* became a cornerstone to modern designers; solidifying his significance in the realm of graphic design.

IS THERE ANY OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION TO KNOW ABOUT THIS DESIGNER?

No.

YOUR NAME: Laney Gilliam

GIVE YOUR EDUCATED OPINION OF THIS DESIGNER AND HIS/HER WORK. ALSO EXPLAIN WHAT INFLUENCE, IF ANY, THIS WORK HAS HAD ON YOUR OWN. A LACK OF INFLUENCE MUST BE EXPLAINED.

Jan Tschichold's work amazes me because of his obvious versatility. He made the progression from ornate and Blackface type, to modernist design, and then to classical roman type design. All of which he excelled at. Throughout his modern designs, he

used an asymmetrical layout for objects and I enjoy the asymmetry. Although the elements are placed in an off-centered fashion, they do not lack order, but rather seem as if they are on a shifted grid instead.

He often used three colors in his compositions, with white and black as staples, then added a vibrant color (typically red). This tri-color composition style gave a clean look and helped it to stand out without being overwhelming to the eyes. Jan Tschichold's use of geometric shapes seems to give the viewer an inside the "skeleton" of the design and how each element works together to create a composition. A notable example of this is his "The Woman Without a Name, Part II" poster.

He was also capable of depicting depth and playing with perception by simply using flat colors, size and geometric shapes. This was and still can be very hard to achieve for many designers. His adamant stance on only using sans-serif type suited the modern style. This is still a strong component of design today, including my own work. Jan Tschichold's influence on my own work, up until recently, was subconscious. I have not been exposed to much history regarding graphic designers before I took a history of graphic design course. Upon research, I discovered Tschichold created the Penguin Book's logo which I have been exposed to for years. His pioneering designs and his written "design formula" or rules outlined in his book *The New Typography* inspired and taught designers after him. Through his influence on so many designers, I have seen the effect of his work infused in their own creations.

I like a sense of asymmetry in my work and that is one of the main principles in his book and throughout his work. This principle is seen in so much design today that it seems common place; however, when Jan Tschichold started, it was groundbreaking. There have been design pieces I created that I now look back on and realize his influence in design can be seen in them. I too often use three colors in my compositions and asymmetry. Some of my design work include the simplicity of geometric and text only. Many of the logos I encounter every day are made from flat colored geometric shape, which is a trademark of modernist design. I tend to be drawn to sans-serif fonts, which is a product of my exposure to them. Sans-serif fonts would not be viewed as acceptable or tasteful if it had not been for the acceptance/promotion of such fonts by Jan Tschichold and other modernists of his time.

It is hard to pin point the full scope of Jan Tschichold's influence on my design, but it is apparent that his legacy lives on. Designers, myself included, seem to create things from ideas to which they have already been exposed. I am simply turning up old ideas and trying to use them in a new way.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Meggs, Phillip B. and Alston W. Purvis. *Meggs' History of Graphic Design, 5th Edition*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2012.

Kristof, Van Gansen. "Bold German Graphic Design": Arts Et Métiers Graphiques and New Typography. In *Visible Culture* no. 23 (Fall, 2015)

