**The essence of the New Typography is clarity.** This puts it into deliberate opposition to the old typography whose aim was "beauty" and whose clarity did not attain the high *level* we require today. This utmost clarity is necessary today because of the manifold claims for our attention made by the extraordinary amount of print, which demands the greatest economy of expression. The gentle swing of the pendulum between ornamental type, the (superficially understood) "beautiful" appearance, and "adornment" by extraneous additions (ornaments) can never produce the pure form we demand today. Especially the feeble clinging to the bugbear of arranging type on a central axis results in the extreme inflexibility of contemporary typography.

In the old typography, the arrangement of individual units is subordinated to the principle of arranging everything on a central axis. In my historical introduction I have shown that this principle started in the Renaissance and has not yet been abandoned. Its superficiality becomes obvious when we look at Renaissance or Baroque title-pages (see pp. 17, 18). Main units are arbitrarily cut up: for example, logical order, which should be expressed by the use of different type-sizes, is ruthlessly sacrificed to external form. Thus the principal line contains only three-quarters of the title, and the rest of the title, set several sizes smaller, appears in the next line. Such things admittedly do not often happen today, but the rigidity of central-axis setting hardly allows work to be carried out with the degree of logic we now demand. The central axis runs through the whole like an artificial, invisible backbone: its raison d'etre is today as pretentious as the tall white collars of Victorian gentlemen. Even in good central-axis composition the contents are subordinated to "beautiful line arrangement." The whole is a "form" which is predetermined and therefore must be inorganic.

We believe it is wrong to arrange a text as if there were some focal point in the centre of a line which would justify such an arrangement. Such points of course do not exist, because we read by starting at one side (Europeans for example read from left to right, the Chinese from top to bottom and right to left). Axial arrangements are illogical because the distance of the stressed, central parts from the beginning and end of the word sequences is not usually equal but constantly varies from line to line.

But not only the preconceived idea of axial arrangement but also all other preconceived ideas - like those of the pseudo-constructivists - are diametrically opposed to the essence of the New Typography. Every piece of typography which originates in a preconceived idea of form, of whatever kind, is wrong. The New Typography is distinguished from the old by the fact that its first objective is to develop its visible form
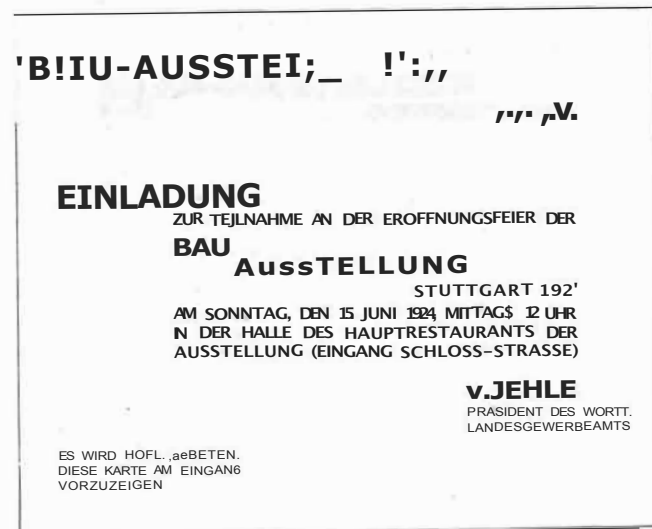
WILLI BAUMEISTER: Invitation card. Example of reading-order.

out of the functions of the text. It is essential to give pure and direct expression to the contents of whatever is printed; just as in the works of technology and nature, "form" must be created out of function. Only then can we achieve a typography which expresses the spirit of modern man. The function of printed text is communication, emphasis (word value), and the logical sequence of the contents.

Every part of a text relates to every other part by a definite, logical **rela-1** tionship of emphasis and value, predetermined by content. It is up to the typographer to express this relationship clearly and visibly, through type sizes and weight. arrangement of lines, use of colour, photography, etc.

The typographer must take the greatest care to study how his work is read and ought to be read. It is true that we usually read from top left to bottom right - but this is not a law. It is shown at its clearest in Willi Baumeister's invitation card. There is no doubt that we read most printed matter in successive steps: first the heading (which need not be the opening word) and then, if we continue to read the printed matter at all, we read the rest bit by bit according to its importance. It is therefore quite feasible to start reading a text at a different point from the top left. The exact place depends entirely on the kind of printed matter and the text itself. But we must admit that there are dangers in departing from the main rule of read-

ing from the top to the bottom. One must therefore, in general, not set a following body of text higher than the preceding one - assuming that the arrangement of the text has a logical sequence and order.

Working through a text according to these principles will usually result in a rhythm different from that of former symmetrical typography. Asymmetry is the rhythmic expression of functional design. In addition to being more logical, asymmetry has the advantage that its complete appearance is far more optically effective than symmetry.

Hence the predominance of asymmetry in the New Typography. Not least, the liveliness of asymmetry is also an expression of our own movement and that of modern life; it is a symbol of the changing forms of life in general when asymmetrical m ment in typography takes the place of symmetrical repose. This movement must not however degenerate into unrest or chaos. A striving for order can, and must, also be expressed in asymmetrical form. It is the only way to make a better, more natural order possible, as opposed to symmetrical form which does not draw its laws from within itself but from outside.

Furthermore, the principle of asymmetry gives unlimited scope for variation in the New Typography. It also expresses the diversity of modern life, unlike central-axis typography which, apart from variations of typeface (the only exception), does not allow such variety.

While the New Typography allows much greater flexibility in design, it also encourages "standardization" in the construction of units, as in building.

BUCHVERTRIEB
G   M   B   H

» 0 AS P-0 LIT IS C HE B U C H «

BERL! N-SCH MARG EN DORF

13.12.1926.
B.H./Soh.

Centred layout using lightweight sanserif has no visual effectiveness and reaches a "typographic low, for today (letterhead for a bookshop).

The old typography did the opposite: it recognized only one basic form, the central-axis arrangement, but allowed all possible and impossible construction elements (typefaces, ornaments, etc.).

The need for clarity in communication raises the question of how to achieve clear and unambiguous form.

Above all, a fresh and original intellectual approach is needed, avoiding all standard solutions. If we think clearly and approach each task with a fresh and determined mind, a good solution will usually result.

The most important requirement is to be objective. This however does not mean a way of design in which everything is omitted that used to be tacked on, as in the letterhead "Das politische Buch" shown here. The type is certainly legible and there are no ornaments whatever. But this is not the kind of objectivity we are talking about. A better name for it would be meagerness. Incidentally tbis letterhead also shows the hollowness of the old principles: without "ornamental" typefaces they do not work.

And yet, it is absolutely necessary to omit everything that is not needed. The old ideas of design must be discarded and new ideas developed. It is obvious that functional design means the abolition of the "ornamentation" that has reigned for centuries.

The use of ornament, in whatever style or quality, comes from an attitude of childish na,1vety. It shows a reluctance to use "pure design," a giving-in to a primitive instinct to decorate - which reveals, in the last resort, a fear of *pure* appearance. It is so easy to employ ornament to cover up bad design! The important architect Adolf Loos, one of the first champions of pure form, wrote already in 1898: "The more primitive a people, the more extravagantly they use ornament and decoration. The Indian overloads everything, every boat, every rudder, every arrow, with ornament. To insist on decoration is to put yourself on the same level as an Indian. The Indian in us all must be overcome. The Indian says: This woman is beautiful because she wears golden rings in her nose and her ears. Men of a higher culture say: This woman is beautiful because she does not wear rings in her nose or her ears. To seek beauty in form itself rather than make it dependent on ornament should be the aim of all mankind."

Today we see in a desire for ornament an ignorant tendency which our century must repress. When in earlier periods ornament was used, often in an extravagant degree, it only showed how little the essence of typography, which is communication, was understood.

It must be understood that "ornament" is not only decorated rules and printers' flowers but also includes all combinations of rules. Even the

thick/thin rule is an ornament. and must be avoided. (It was used to dis-
guise contrasts. to reduce them to one level. The New Typography, on the
other hand. emphasizes contrasts and uses them to create a new unity.)

"Abstract decorations" which some foundries have produced under differ-
ent names are also ornaments in this sense. Unfortunately many people
have thought the essence of the New Typography consists merely in the
use of bold rules. circles. and triangles. If these are merely substituted for
the old ornaments. nothing is improved. This error is forgivable since. after
all. all former typography was oriented towards the ornamental. But that is
exactly why the utmost care must be taken to avoid replacing the old floral
or other ornamentation with abstract ornaments. Equally the New
Typography has absolutely nothing to do with "pictorial" typesetting
(Bildsatz) which has become fashionable recently. In almost all its exam-
ples it is the opposite of what we are aiming for.

But it is not enough to dispense with ornament in order to create a mean-
ingful form. We have already seen that even the old form that dispenses
with ornament is ineffective because it is still based on the effect of orna-
mental types. The form of the old typography could be taken in at a glance,
even though this does not correspond with the reading process. Even if I
succeed in recognizing the outline of the type matter I have not really read
anything. Reading presupposes eye movement. The New Typography so
designs text matter that the eye is led from one word and one group of
words to the next. So a logical organization of the text is needed. through
the use of different type-sizes, weights. placing in relation to space. colour.
etc.

The re.al meaning of form is made clearer by its opposite. We would not rec-
ognize day as day if night did not exist. The ways to achieve contrast are
endless: the simplest are large/small. light/dark. horizontal/vertical.
square/round. smooth/rough, closed/open. coloured/plain; all offer many
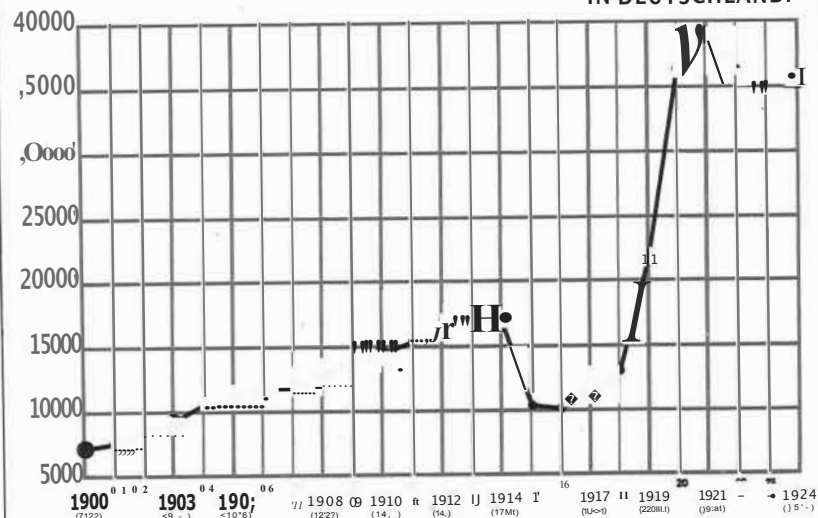possibilities of effective design.

Large differences in weight are better than small. The closer in size differ-
ent types are to each other. the weaker will be the result. A limit to the
number of type sizes used - normally three to not more than five - is
always to be recommended. This has the additional advantage of being
easier both in designing and in setting. Variations in size should be
emphatic: it is always better for the headline to be very large and the
remaining text noticeably smaller.

It is vital that all contrasts. for example in type sizes. should be logical. For
example. a forename should not have a much larger initial letter if the

JAN TSCHICHOLD: Poster 1926, Normformat A

beginning of the principal name is not specially indicated. All form must correspond with meaning and not contradict it.

In asymmetric design, the white background plays an active part in the design. The typical main display of the old typography, the title-page, showed its black type on a white background that played no part in the design (see the reproductions on pp. 20-27). In asymmetric typography, on the other hand, the paper background contributes to a greater or lesser degree to the effect of the whole. The strength of its effect depends on whether it is deliberately emphasized or not; but in asymmetric design it is always a component. The New Typography uses the effectiveness of the former "background" quite deliberately, and considers the blank white spaces on the paper as formal elements just as much as the areas of black type. In this way the New Typography has enriched the art of printing by giving it a new medium of expression. The powerful effect in many examples of the New Typography depends directly on the use of large areas of white: white is always stronger than grey or black. Strong contrasts between white and black, in the form of type or rules, emphasize the white areas and greatly assist the total effect.

A common misunderstanding of what we are about can be seen when the area of white has been decided beforehand and the text compressed into it. It is equally wrong to suppose that areas of white are ever more important than the words of the text.

When the design of a piece of typography is looked at - and all typography has a design, of varying nature and quality - modern typography is distinguished by its formal use of the white and black areas. Of course, logically only the type is important.

The pursuit of greater effectiveness and clarity in the relationship between black and white areas often leads to a noticeable reduction of margins (always prominent in the old typography). In the New Typography margins often almost entirely disappear. Of course type cannot in most cases be set right up to the edge of the paper, which would hinder legibility. In small items of printed matter, 12 to 24 points are the minimum margin required; in posters 48 points. On the other hand, borders of solid red or black can be taken right up to the edge, since unlike type they do not require a white margin to achieve their best effect. Blocks too can be bled off the page provided the trim is accurate.

Colour

In contrast with the old typography, in which colour as well as form ""·as always used decoratively, in the New Typography colour is used function-

ally, i.e. the physiological effect peculiar to each colour is used to increase or decrease the importance of a block of type, a photograph, or whatever. White, for example, has the effect of reflecting light: it shines. Red comes forward, it seems closer to the reader than any other colour, including white. Black on the other hand is the densest colour and seems to retire the furthest. Of the other colours, yellow, for example, is close to red, and blue to black. (We do not accept a "literary" identification of colours, for example r e d = love, y e l l o w = envy, as not being natural.)

We have today a strong feeling for light, therefore for white, which explains its importance in the New Typography. The liveliness of red corresponds to our own natures, and we prefer it to all other colours. The already strong contrast between black and white can be greatly enhanced by the addition of red. (This is admittedly not a new discovery: but we have perhaps made sharper use of this combination than the earlier typographers, who also much enjoyed using black-red on white, especially in the Gothic and Baroque periods.)

The combination of black-red is of course not the only possibility, as is often mistakenly supposed, but it is often chosen because of its greater intensity. Colour should be used, in general, to help express the purpose of the work: a visiting-card does not require three colours, and a poster generally needs more than just black and white.

Pure red, yellow, and blue, unmixed with black, will generally be preferred, because of their intensity, but other mixed colours need not be excluded.

Type

None of the typefaces to whose basic form some kind of ornament has been added (serifs in roman type, lozenge shapes and curlicues in fraktur) meet our requirements for clarity and purity. Among all the types that are available, the so-called "Grotesque" (sanserif) or "block letter" ("skeleton letters" would be a better name) is the only one in spiritual accordance with our time.

To proclaim sanserif as the typeface of our time is not a question of being fashionable, it really does express the same tendencies to be seen in our architecture. It will not be long before not only the "art" typefaces, as they are sometimes called today, but also the classical typefaces, disappear, as completely as the contorted· furniture of the eighties.

There is no doubt that the sanserif types available today are not yet wholly satisfactory as all-purpose faces. The essential characteristics of this type have not been fully worked out: the lower-case letters especially are still too like their "humanistic" counterparts. Most of them, in particular the