

Jan Tschichold and his pictorial posters

Jan Tschichold (1902-1974) was a typographer, book designer, teacher and writer. Tschichold had converted to Modernist design principles in 1923 after visiting the first Weimar Bauhaus exhibition. His most noted work was the book *Die neue Typographie* this book was a manifesto of modern design.

What interest me the most are his pictorial posters. So I used the translation of Tschichold's book the new typography to do a little research about this subject.

I find it really interesting how he sees how a poster works:

'Whenever advertising is required for an object which can be illustrated, the pictorial poster is essential, because it is incomparably more meaningful than any poster consisting only of words. The illustration must be as objective as possible: above all, free from the personal "touch" of the artist. As no drawn posters existed at the beginning of the century, they could be effective. People had more time then than they have today, and the novel graphic forms led them to look at the posters. Today, conditions for posters are different. A poster, whether pictorial or lettered, must be absorbed at the moment of noticing or walking past; or, if a longer text is necessary, must strike and attract by means of its total effect.'

It's funny that he talks about the people of today, and that they are in a rush and don't have time to look at posters, while his book was written in 1928! But it's still applicable, because posters still have an informative function, and they still work.

And I would take more my time to look at his poster if I passed by, more than I would for a shocking or provoking poster as you see today.

So Tschichold made these series of film posters for the cinema in Munich: Phoebus-Palast. As he tells in his book, the production costs were really low and the posters changed every week, he had to work very fast so that the film title could be published a couple of days before the first showing of a new movie. He says that it was rarely possible to exploit the full possibilities of design. That makes it even more incredible how beautiful his posters are, maybe he couldn't do everything he wanted but his posters seem to be so complete. They are really simple but there is the perfect balance between image and text, form and colour. That is what attracts me so much, a beautiful romantic film still combined with a very tight –strongly influenced by the Bauhaus and the constructivism- graphic design.

The poster *Laster Der Menschheit* on the picture underneath is a great example of the 'balance' I described before. It expresses a great peace, because of the picture of the woman with closed eyes but also because of the beautiful balance between the black and white, and composition. Here you can see –as I know now- that he was forced to make his poster with few elements, but with this result you can say that's a good thing.

