L'enfant terrible
Education
Typography
The New Wave
Technique

Wolfgang Weingart
Revolutionary Modern Swiss Typography

Wolfgang Weingart is regarded as the "enfant terrible" of modern Swiss typography. At an early stage he broke with the established rules: He freed letters from the shackles of the design grid, spaced, underlined or reshaped them and reorganized type-setting. Later he mounted half-tone films to form collages for many of his posters. He was born in Switzerland in 1941. After his graduation as a typesetter at the Basel School of Design Weingart shaped several generations of designers from 1968 onwards. They came from throughout the world and helped him achieve international recognition. Weingart's experimental and expressive design approach as well as the connection between analogue and digital techniques broke the mould of classical Swiss typography.

I

In April 1958, at the age of 17, Weingart began
his one-year course in the area of applied art and
graphic design. **He soon realized that the process**
of sketching and planning for linotaun and woodcuts,
both which are printmaking techniques. He was also
interested in photography and enjoyed it.
During his free time he continued to do self-imposed projects that included working
with setting type and print. During this time he first encountered metal type. Wolfgang
stated that during this moment that he, "could not foresee the potential, nor the
creative freedom that awaited the typesetter with our twenty-six movable letters and
their affiliated signs."



At the time he was very focused on Swiss typography however he was also interested in Futura and "Grotesk designed in 1959 as he thought that the way the word "Grotesk" was used in the past was both an abashed and courageous. There was the first time he perceived the meaning of unity between type and image. In 1960 Weingart had already mastered the techniques of letterpress printing and began to experiment with typography in his work with letters and type elements in round compositions. He also began to experiment with unusual letter spacing and the repetition of words on a singular page.





In 1962 he chose to experiment with the letter "O" which was an independent project that interested him and interest him for many years to come. It was during this time that he began to combine new signs with the letter "M" and to experiment with it by altering its size, positioned on the pages surfaces and also its angles. He learned to manipulate the letter he had chosen; he began to break it down, recreating it, deconstructing it and working with the space in and around the letter forms. In 1963 Weingart then moved to Basel on Switzerland where he enrolled in the Basel School of design, the "Mecca of Swiss classical" Swiss Typography.



Weingart is known to have a rebellious mind-set and has liked to push the limits of what is considered as 'the norm' and from an early stage he broke the typographic rules by freeing letters from their restricting design grids. He spaced them, underlined them or reshaped them and reorganized type-setting.

Weingart believed that the development of the Swiss Typography was becoming stagnant as it was sterile and anonymous. His goal was to breathe new life into the teaching of new typography. He believed that the only way to break typographic rules was to know them; an advantage he gained from his apprenticeship. He encouraged his students to look and experiment with, not only the basic design relationships with type and image, but also with letter spacing, with the goal to test the limits of readability. He allowed his students to have the freedom to experiment and create in an expressionistic manner allowing certain graphic modifications of type thus intensifying meaning. Due to this his students dubbed this style as Weingart typography although he never developed any style on his students, and also did not set out to create a style. The results of this experimentation conceived the realisation that with increased space between letters, the words became graphic in expression and the message became less dependent upon reading than they had supposed. This act of experimenting challenged the role of typography, according to Ernst Ruder, "Typography has one plain duty before it and that is to convey information in writing…."







A printed work which cannot be read becomes a product without purpose." This new style of typography, developed by Weingart from his students, became more popular and led to a new generation of designers that approached input design in an entirely different manner than traditional Swiss typography.

II

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III

His work is very experimental and included **experimenting with the offset printing processes to produce posters** that were spontaneous and chaotic but also playful and spontaneous resulting in unusual textures and building up images within his posters. These posters then became his most famous and admired works and in creating these posters, Weingart revived the techniques inspired by Dada collage and photo montage by layering images and type that had been photographed.



The practitioners of this new style also called Swiss punk designers, disagreed with the less is more and minimalist philosophy, by ascribing that typography can play a more expressive role and that this increase in expression aimed to improve communication. Therefore, New Wave designers such as Weingart felt intuition was just as valuable as analytical skill in composition.





By ignoring the grid structure, this meant that type could be placed centre, to the left or the right, or be chaotic. This gave the artist the freedom they wanted or needed to express themselves. The text also became textured with the development of transparent film and the increase in collage in graphic design, a style that is very prominent in Wolfgang's work as himself mounted halftone films to form collages for many of his posters.





One of his most famous posters and most experimental was the 1973 poster design of his 1968 exhibition poster of the Mathematik which he created by crumpling up tissue and photocopying it to get a range of shapes, tones and textures.

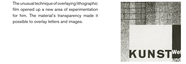
IV



Film Techniques, Layerings as Collage

Weingart had exhausted the possibilities of lead typesetting and the letterpress. Although he experimented with photo-optical processes, he found that phototypesetting, which was a topical theme at the time, was not a viable alternative for him. He preferred to work by hand and see the marks left by the different materials during the printing process. By getting physically involved in the design and implementation processes, Weingart was better able to control them and react to unexpected circumstances.





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Monday	Closed
Tuesday	10.00 – 18.00
Wednesday	10.00 – 18.00
Thursday	10.00 – 21.00
Friday	10.00 – 18.00
Saturday	10.00 – 18.00
Sunday	10.00 – 18.00

Sophia Brunner "Typoaktion. Plakate" Kleinschreibung Typografie Typografie Typografie