

Otl Aicher

Design. Type. Thinking.



Preface

Otl Aicher was one of the most important and influential designers of the twentieth century. For Norman Foster he was 'the best designer in the world'. In the lengthy catalogue of his masterpieces, the comprehensive design and appearance of the 1972 Olympic Games in Munich stand out as the largest, most visible and best known. It uniquely combines many aspects of Aicher's work: the idea of visual communication which he helped develop, his use of colour and its importance in conveying information, his political convictions and the clarity of his thought and action. At the beginning of his trajectory towards this synthesis of his work as a designer, and together with his future wife Inge Scholl, he conceived a centre of further education in 1946, the Ulm Volkshochschule, as a place of democratic learning after the experiences of the Nazi era. This was followed in 1953 by the Ulm School of Design (Hochschule für Gestaltung, HfG), where he taught and served several times as a member of the rectorate during the fifteen years of the school's existence. Many designers who became influential themselves came from the Ulm School of Design or invoke it.

This present volume reconstructs Aicher's development and every aspect of his work as a designer as well as his activity as a teacher, architect, photographer and typographer. The book shows his influence on, what he called, the 'visual appearance' of many companies, now commonly known as a corporate identity.

A unique characteristic of Aicher as a designer was the unity of his thinking and writing. He wrote books in which we can read what he thought, how he reflected about his work, how he judged the politics as well as the social and cultural developments of his day and why he also protested for a free, democratic society. As a designer, Aicher was a critic of his time, culture and society, not incidentally, but through and through. None of these facets can be separated from his work and his personality as a designer, however contradictory and tension-filled the whole might sometimes seem.

Aicher's birthdate – a century ago – is the external impetus for this publication. The interval between then and now creates not only a temporal distance but also a historical framework for a critical assessment of Aicher's achievements. The authors of this volume consider him from a scholarly perspective on the basis of available sources. Our goal today is to rediscover, recognise and understand Aicher, not to imitate him. This is why we decided not to use his unique typefaces or typography.

Our thanks go to Prestel Verlag for printing this volume. We are also grateful to the Technical University of Munich for its support through funds from the former chair for Industrial Design headed by Fritz Frenkler. We also thank Florian Aicher and the HfG-Archiv/Museum Ulm, the archive of the former School of Design and its director, Martin Mantele, for supporting the project.

1 Otl Aicher in his Ulm studio, 1953.



Thinking and Making

Philosopher as a Designer

Otl Aicher was a philosopher in everything he designed and created. While this assertion accurately reflects his own self-concept, it is in fact misleading and in need of clarification. It would be incorrect to state that he was a designer *as well as* a philosopher, as if the latter were only something ancillary and philosophy an appendage to design and hence something ultimately expendable. In the end, not every designer is a philosopher. As a designer, however, Aicher was a philosopher. This 'as' is important. The little word suggests a relationship between these two professions, one of which takes precedence over the other because it is more fundamental than the other. For Aicher, thinking philosophically was a condition for the possibility of designing and creating, and his work shows that his philosophy was the condition for the possibility of his activities as a designer. The way he thought is visible in his praxis and, vice versa, his praxis also reveals the way he thought.

Calling someone a 'philosopher' is at first glance nothing special because every individual who thinks and passes judgment independently is a philosopher. No one needs to have a philosophy of his own to be a philosopher. But it is another matter when a designer not only thinks and passes judgment independently but also has his own philosophical standards, his own philosophy. That is precisely what Otl Aicher had, but it did not happen overnight. He developed his philosophical standards gradually.

As a schoolboy Aicher was already interested in philosophy and it was the parish priest at Söflingen near Ulm who inspired him to read Thomas Aquinas.¹ Then, while still at school, he also read Theodor Haecker's book *Was ist der Mensch?* (What is man?).² Enthralled by this thinker and man of letters, he visited Haecker in Munich. Haecker explained Thomas Aquinas and Søren Kierkegaard, whose works he had translated into German, to the young man.³ Even before visiting Haecker, Aicher had already made the acquaintance of Carl Muth, the editor of the Catholic cultural magazine *Hochland*. Muth and Haecker were friends who

worked together and also formed the core of a group of people who, retreating into an 'inner emigration', conspiratorially opposed National Socialism. Aicher corresponded with both on such topics as the philosophy of Augustine of Hippo as well as the relationship between state and religion and the crisis they both were facing under National Socialism in the 1930s.⁴ Aicher introduced Hans and Sophie Scholl – later members of the White Rose resistance group – to Haecker and Muth. Hans helped organise Muth's library, and Sophie occasionally spent the night at his home. They also took part in evening reading circles with Haecker and Muth.⁵

Haecker's *Was ist der Mensch?* was, however, not the first philosophical work that Aicher read. He began with the pre-Socratics Heraclitus, Parmenides, Anaxagoras, Empedocles and Zeno of Elea and then proceeded to Socrates, Plato and Aristotle.⁶ He later wrote that he owed his intellectual existence to the Greeks.⁷ It was from them that he learned to think philosophically. This is apparent in many of his works, particularly in an exhibition on William of Ockham that he organised as part of the *Erkundungen* (explorations) series sponsored by the Bavarian Reinsurance Company in Munich. Born in the English village of Ockham in Surrey in 1285 or 1286, the Franciscan friar William lived in Munich from 1329 until his death in the plague years between 1346 and 1349. He developed a new philosophical methodology, a new philosophy of language and a new theology. His radical innovations, which were at times theologically and politically risky, led him to face accusations of heresy at the papal court at Avignon. He fled from there with other Franciscans to Pisa, where they met and were given refuge by the Holy Roman Emperor Louis IV – Louis the Bavarian as he was derogatorily called. Offered sanctuary at Louis's court in Munich, William lived there in exile. Aicher was enthusiastic about this venturesome thinker and consequently wanted to mount an exhibition about him.⁸ As with Ludwig Wittgenstein, he discovered an intellectual proximity and affinity to William of Ockham.

¹ Eva Moser, *Otl Aicher, Gestalter* (Ostfildern, 2012), p. 16.

² Theodor Haecker, *Was ist der Mensch?* (Leipzig, 1933; reprint, Berlin, 1959).

³ Otl Aicher, *Innenseiten des Kriegs* (Frankfurt am Main, 1985), pp. 28–30.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 46, 67 f.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 129 f.

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 172 f.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Otl Aicher, Gabriele Greindl and Wilhelm Vossenkuhl, *Wilhelm von Ockham. Das Risiko modern zu denken*, exh. cat. Bayerische Rückversicherung, Munich (Munich, 1986). The exhibition later travelled to Milan, Tokyo and numerous other venues.

2 The Battle of Mühldorf, 1322. Louis the Bavarian defeats Frederick the Fair of Habsburg.

This and the following display boards, which also served as posters, were designed by Otl Aicher for the exhibition *Wilhelm von Ockham*, 1986 (Erkundungen series of the Bayerische Rückversicherung).

In the exhibition catalogue, Aicher explained that the panels were intended as a form of communication and therefore required their own language – their structure corresponds to the syntax of seeing [Otl Aicher, 'Ockham ein Bilderbogen', in Otl Aicher, Gabriele Greindl and Wilhelm Vossenkuhl, *Wilhelm von Ockham. Das Risiko modern zu denken* (Munich, 1986)].



1 One of Otl Aicher's posters for Romano Guardini's lecture 'Religiöse Ansprachen über christliche Weltanschauung' (Religious talks on the Christian worldview), 1945.



‘my thinking was a protest against hitler’

In all the fields with which he occupied himself, Otl Aicher was an autodidact – industrial and graphic design, typography and typefaces, photography and architecture. The same is true of the subjects he addressed in his many writings, which range from Aristotle to Wittgenstein, medieval construction to semiotics, the Peasants’ War to nuclear fission, cooking to political events of the day. ‘I learned by doing’,¹ Aicher once wrote; he acquired knowledge through reading. Like few other creatively active people, he continuously reflected on his life and work, recording his thoughts in countless notes and texts. This flood of written documents encompasses analysis and speculation, insights and errors, truth and fiction interwoven into an intricate web with which he processed the vast body of what he read and attempted to bring order to his indefatigable verbal and visual outpouring. Eva Moser highlighted many of the contradictions in the life of this prolific reader, writer and doer in her comprehensive biography of Aicher.² Looking back in the 1980s, Otl Aicher himself identified his guiding principle, thus referencing the root of his acts of reflection and creation: ‘mein denken war andenken gegen hitler’ (my thinking was a protest against hitler).³ This ‘thinking against Hitler’ manifested itself above all in resistance and rational communication, which will be considered in the following essay as maxims for Aicher’s life and work.

Aicher was eleven years old in 1933, the year the National Socialists assumed control of the German state; his adolescence and intellectual development, thus, coincided with the rise to power of a racist political party and the instrumentalisation of all areas of life on behalf of the interests and goals of the Nazi state. The vast majority of Germans were quickly ‘brought into line’ – they were integrated or integrated themselves into the homogeneous ‘people’s community’ sought by the National Socialists. However, fortified by friendships, by the Catholic congregation in Söflingen near Ulm around Father Franz Weiß and by his own reading of a number of critical works,⁴ the young Aicher grew into an opponent of the Nazi system. His aversion to the Nazi state deepened further through his contact with

members of the Scholl family. His friendship with Hans and Sophie Scholl, whose resistance against the dictatorship under the name of the White Rose he experienced first-hand, as well as his relationship with Inge Scholl, his future wife, were defining events in his life, even if he later retrospectively embellished and overstated his own commitment as a member of the resistance movement.⁵ Aicher refused to join the Hitler Youth, even after membership became compulsory in 1939 and in consequence he was prohibited from taking his school-leaving examination in 1941 – an initial indication of his characteristic combination of resistance, stubbornness and self-confidence. He in fact derived strength from his refusal; by withdrawing from a community that had been imposed on him, he reinforced his own independent course of self-study in addition to his confidence in his own abilities and decisions. This self-will was then coupled with a certain amount of tenacity; he never completed school or attained an academic degree.

After being called up for military service in 1941, Aicher organised an exchange of essays and articles for a small circle of like-minded friends. Aptly named *Windlicht* (storm lantern),⁶ these texts were an expression of a lonely resistance and an attempt to find direction and shelter in the face of the storm raging about them. Carrying on the spirit of the White Rose, pursuing enlightened resistance became a personal motto throughout his life, a motivation for his work in further education at the Ulm Volkshochschule, with the Ulm School of Design (Hochschule für Gestaltung, HfG) as well as in his efforts combating rearmament and the ‘police state’.⁷ His lifelong antipathy towards the ‘state’ – for him the epitome of authoritarian heteronomy – was rooted in his experience of the Nazi era; his memoirs *innenseiten des kriegs* (inside the war) constantly involve ‘thinking in anger’ about the fight against the ‘Moloch state’.⁸ Freedom and the self-determination of the individual became Aicher’s one and only criterion, and it was for this reason that he responded all his life with opposition, refusal and even aggression to any exercise of power that interfered with the freedom of the individual.⁹ The posthumously

¹ Otl Aicher, *Frühe Plakate*, HfG-Archiv Ulm, Ai AZ. 419; translated.

² Eva Moser, *Otl Aicher, Gestalter* (Ostfildern, 2012).

³ HfG-Archiv Ulm, Ai AZ. 3304.

⁴ Especially the writings of Carl Muth and Theodor Haecker.

⁵ Otl Aicher, *innenseiten des kriegs* (2nd ed., Frankfurt am Main, 1998). Originally published in 1985, this autobiographical work testifies to how the memory of the Nazi era perpetuates itself as a motif of resistance, taking on a life of its own right up to the moment of his writing; from a historical perspective, the publication must be read as ‘poetry and truth’.

⁶ HfG-Archiv Ulm, Findbuch 09 (Nachlass Aicher), 0.1 *Windlicht*.

⁷ Otl Aicher, ‘polizeistaat. begriff und sache’, in *schreiben und widersprechen* (Berlin, 1993), pp. 243–247.

⁸ Aicher, *innenseiten des kriegs* (see note 5), pp. 200, 204.

⁹ Aicher’s position regarding the state, however, changed over time. In 1952, he himself reflected on his ‘political stance’ between the parties: ‘Strongly politically interested (committed) although not a member of a party. Would be with the left wing of the CDU [Christian Democratic Union] if it didn’t mix Christianity with politics, or with that wing of the SPD [Social Democratic Party] which advocates practical social policy and renounces Marxism.’ Typescript in HfG-Archiv Ulm, Otl Aicher Archiv, dated Easter 1952 (this was kindly brought to my attention by Dagmar Rinker).

published essays 'freiheit heute' (freedom today), 'ist das noch demokratie?' (is that still democracy?), 'die abschaffung des staates' (the abolition of the state) and 'bomben gegen den staat' (bombs against the state)¹⁰ are so radical in nature that they have earned him a place in the ranks of other thinkers critical of the state such as Henry David Thoreau and Jacques Rancière. When he recognises the Federal Republic of Germany as a 'water cannon democracy of truncheon humanitarianism'¹¹ led by political parties 'within a citadel of trickery and scoundrels'¹² or presumes a link 'between bolshevik show trials, german gas chambers and american blackmail competition'¹³ his radicalism, even in its most exaggerated form, is an expression of 'thinking against Hitler'. His ideal was a life free of domination, a form of anarchy that he sought to realise for himself, but by no means systematically practised, at his home in the Swabian countryside to which he gave the moniker 'autonomous republic of rotis'. He refused academic and state honours – for him governmental tools of 'domestication'¹⁴ – and practised civil disobedience, but his professional work with corporations and industry always required him to conform to a certain extent to existing structures and to enforce decisions. He was incensed by policies that were aimed solely at 'the gospel of the market economy', the strengthening of the consumer's purchasing power – for him, this was a lesson drawn from history that 'only he who can consume is a conforming citizen'.¹⁵ And yet, he himself served the capitalist machinery of consumption, assisting it with his skills as a designer. The anarchist was 'a cautious and self-critical utopian, not an unworldly one.'¹⁶

Living through the Nazi era, however, not only led to a general resistance to the state and authority but also to the means by which power is asserted. For Aicher, National Socialism operated a 'politics of emotion and instinct'¹⁷ – it was based on a pointed, systematic seduction through feelings, which for Aicher was particularly evident in the forms of state representation and symbolism, from the monumental classicism of its official buildings to the emblems and the colours of its flags. The rejection of emotional seduction

and delusion, and the ensuing commitment to rational enlightenment and communication, are central motifs of his work and his 'thinking against Hitler'. For Aicher, information instead of persuasion was the '*ultima ratio* of design and composition' and, in consequence, 'the guarantee of a new anti-fascist beginning'.¹⁸ The attempt to rationalise design and make it understandable runs throughout the entirety of his work, and this is also why he fiercely resisted seeing any form of design as 'art', which for him was linked to emotionality and irrationality. Aicher contrasted the 'deceitful' artist, whom Plato criticised early on for deluding people with his art, with the search for logical order in design, for comprehensible communication between informer and observer. The fact that Aicher, for all his reticence towards aesthetic exaggeration, did indeed proceed artistically in the production of his designs, against his will as it were, by making brilliant use of the visual aesthetic principles of harmony, order and proportion, is one of the numerous paradoxes inherent in his complex personality. Thus, the car enthusiast also conceived an exhibition criticising the automobile,¹⁹ the organiser of anti-nuclear Easter marches designed a poster for a nuclear reactor and the champion of personal freedom could behave in a decidedly authoritarian manner with his family and co-workers.²⁰

The counterpart to the experience of the Nazi era and the lifelong trauma of the state's infringements on individual liberty was the practically ecstatic experience of a new beginning after the downfall of the dictatorship. Like the architects Josef Lehmbruck, Werner Wirsing, Günter Behnisch and Frei Otto, Otl Aicher belonged to a generation that had lived through the war as young men and who were firmly convinced in 1945 that they could help build a new and better world in Germany. For Aicher, this much hoped-for *zero hour* opened up new horizons in the development of a new design. In the summer of 1945, he noted, 'We are entering a new country. A more beautiful country. A bombed-out country, to be sure – devastated, suffering – but a more beautiful one. It is a cold morning and we are freezing, but it is a morning. One day the world will envy

¹⁰ In aicher, *schreiben und widersprechen* (see note 7), pp. 227–236.

¹¹ otl aicher, 'die bundesrepublik von außen gesehen', in *schreiben und widersprechen* (see note 7), pp. 97–103, here p. 102; translated.

¹² otl aicher, 'freiheit heute', in *schreiben und widersprechen* (see note 7), pp. 214–226, here p. 226; translated.

¹³ aicher, *innenseiten des kriegs* (see note 5), p. 30; translated.

¹⁴ otl aicher, 'freiheit heute' (see note 12), p. 220; translated.

¹⁵ otl aicher, 'der siebte deutsche weg', in aicher, *schreiben und widersprechen* (see note 7), pp. 156–167, here p. 162; translated.

¹⁶ Wilhelm Vossenkuhl, 'Anarchie und Design', in aicher, *schreiben und widersprechen* (see note 7), pp. 37–44, here p. 37; translated.

¹⁷ Otl Aicher, 'studio null, die politik geht auf stelzen', 8 September 1950, HfG-Archiv Ulm, Ai AZ. 2233; quoted in moser, *otl aicher, gestalter* (see note 2), p. 108; translated.

¹⁸ Thilo Koenig, 'Information statt Persuasion. Werbung und Plakatgestaltung mit fotografischen Mitteln', in *Objekt + Objektiv = Objektivität? Fotografie an der HfG Ulm 1953–1968*, ed. Christiane Wachsmann, exh. cat. HfG-Archiv Ulm and Bauhaus-Archiv, Berlin, 1991/92 (Ulm, 1991), p. 93, quoted in moser, *otl aicher, gestalter* (see note 2), p. 150; translated.

¹⁹ otl aicher, 'reden über die umwelt', in aicher, *schreiben und widersprechen* (see note 7), pp. 168 f., here p. 169: 'the car is a social and cultural failure. It is only an economic success. Abolish it. Let's invent a new Car.' Abolish and reinvent is a typical Aicherian paradox.

²⁰ moser, *otl aicher, gestalter* (see note 2), pp. 224, 324 f.



⁶⁶ aicher, 'polizeistaat' (see note 7), p. 244; translated: 'the ministry of the interior has a file on me; i am very sure of that'.

⁶⁷ Walter Jens, who was also convicted, gave a much-lauded speech in court against the term 'reprehensible', see Walter Jens, 'Das ist ungeheuerlich! Wo leben wir denn?', in *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (29 January 1985).

⁶⁸ aicher, 'polizeistaat' (see note 7), p. 246; translated.

⁶⁹ otl aicher, 'die suche nach dem staat ohne staat', in aicher, *schreiben und widersprechen* (see note 7), pp. 179–186, here p. 182; translated.

⁶⁰ aicher, 'kultur des staates' (see note 39), p. 203 (in opposition to the 'neo-baroque spring' of the Stuttgart Staatsgalerie).

⁶¹ otl aicher, 'kultur als alltäglichkeit', in aicher, *schreiben und widersprechen* (see note 7), pp. 15–20, here p. 18; translated.

⁶² The busts are now on view in Ulm's Stadthaus, <https://stadthaus.ulm.de/hans-und-sophie-scholl>.

in 1986, and Aicher had the justified suspicion that the Ministry of the Interior had opened a file on him.⁵⁶ Aicher was so incensed that forty years after the end of the war, a peaceful sit-in against military rearmament could be criminalised as 'reprehensible' coercion,⁵⁷ that Inge Scholl could be found guilty, that young protesters could be imprisoned and that he himself could be placed under surveillance that he even drew comparisons between this situation and the Nazi era and the East German justice system. In a number of texts about the state, justice, the police and the media, he angrily gave vent to his 'thinking against Hitler': 'we live in a democracy. right. and we live in a police state with an expanse, the like of which has never existed. [...] the citizen is precondemned. everyone is a potential terrorist.'⁵⁸ Citing the locations of protests, Aicher noted that the Federal Republic of Germany had 'developed a new defensive technique of domestic political combat' against demonstrating citizens 'with shield, truncheon, visor, water cannon, tear gas and plastic bullets. things were cleared up and swept away with them. in brokdorf, in bitburg, in wackersdorf, in mutlangen'.⁵⁹ For Aicher, the sense of freedom and justice in post-war West Germany was insufficiently developed or cultivated, and he attempted to prove this with caustic, albeit often overgeneralised attacks on party politics, arms exports and the destruction of the environment. In this context, he also strongly opposed the postmodern architecture that had become widespread in the 1980s, in which he saw a reversion to the past and, thus, a loss of the ideals of modernity that he had embraced in 1945.⁶⁰ Aicher's last texts, written before his tragic death as the result of a traffic accident in 1991, reflect a profoundly pessimistic outlook: 'the dirtier the world becomes, the sicker the people, the more they are drawn upwards. up into buildings that are like mirrored monstrosities, into the temples of elite consumerism, into the films of promise and glory, into the



symbols of the other self, of the other world. we have forgotten how to lay hands on things. the world of commodities is no longer produced'.⁶¹ 'Thinking against Hitler' was the driving force behind Aicher's creativity and critical reflection, but it also caused considerable personal problems for him in the post-war period, a time when many preferred to forget the past. His final works before his death were busts of Hans and Sophie Scholl (figs. 8, 9); it was here that this thinking took shape for the last time.⁶²

word was picked up by the press. The notion itself is older. The visual appearance of the Braun company was created as early as 1954 [... and] immediately after the war, the appearance of the Volkshochschule Ulm.²⁶

Without a doubt, Aicher defined the field of communication design in the German-speaking world, both methodologically and formally, with the visual images developed under his direction. The term corporate identity, which Aicher used analogously to 'visual appearance', became widely used by American marketing strategists from the early 1960s onwards. How intensively Aicher, who taught as a guest professor at Yale University in 1958 and in Rio de Janeiro in 1959, dealt with these developments remains to be researched. It is certain, however, that he was aware of international trends, since, in a study for Deutsche Lufthansa, he referred to projects by both Olivetti and IBM.²⁷

Aicher had a clear idea of how to begin work on a visual identity. The first and most important step is the intellectual analysis of the commissioning company or institution: 'people are as they show themselves and as they show themselves so are they. [...] this makes the question of the visual image first and foremost a philosophical and moral problem.'²⁸ In response to the questions 'who am I?' and 'how do I want to be?' a representational 'image' is developed simultaneously. This self-examination is 'the image of how one would like to look oneself. visual appearance is the visible form of a projected image, its concretization in gestures, behaviour, attitudes, profiles, lines, styles, in colours and figures, in actions and achievements, in products and objects. [...] the designer is the philosopher of the company'.²⁹

A visual appearance or identity is therefore never merely an external coating, an imposed outfit or even a purchased image. It visualises the cultural, social, economic and, last but not least, ecological³⁰ attitude of a company or institution. Only when the products, services as well as the actions of all involved are coherent can a visual appearance, successful in every facet, be created. Aicher expanded the previous role of the designer in the direction of an advisor who not only initiates but also leads

the self-discovery process within a company. He was able to take this path for the first time with Braun. Later, during his time at Rotis, Aicher formulated the expanded professional profile of the designer as a prerequisite for working with his office. With the lighting company ERCO based in Lüdenscheid, he was optimally able to realise his ideal conception as a philosophical designer and designing philosopher beginning in 1974 with the general manager Klaus Jürgen Maack as a congenial partner (figs. pp. 128–131).

Deutsche Lufthansa

Although the corporate image of Deutsche Lufthansa is considered one of Aicher's most important commissions and a milestone in design history worldwide (figs. 9–18; figs. pp. 114–117), he himself judged the outcome with a certain sense of resentment. For him, an optimum had not been achieved, and he considered the result merely 'good', since 'the board ordered, decided and had things carried out', and thus 'it was not joint intellectual and speculative work'.³¹

Already in the late 1950s, there was first contact between Deutsche Lufthansa and the HfG Ulm,³² and in July 1962, the airline commissioned the E 5 to develop a visual appearance for the carrier. The mediator had been Hans G. Conrad, who had already worked closely with Otl Aicher during his studies at Ulm. As previously mentioned, he had gone to Braun AG after graduating in 1958 and headed Lufthansa's advertising department beginning in 1962. In addition to Conrad, Claus Wille – another Ulm graduate from the Department of Visual Communication – also worked for Lufthansa's advertising department in Cologne.

The example of the Lufthansa project can be used to illustrate both the organisation and the personnel responsibilities of the E 5. As its head, Aicher was fully responsible for the conception. The execution was in the hands of Fritz Querengässer, Tomás Gonda³³ and Hans 'Nick' Roericht.

In the first phase, Aicher and his team started with an analysis of the airline's previous

9 Official logo of Deutsche Lufthansa, 1962. Since 2018, the airline has been representing itself using a fundamental reworking of the visual appearance designed by the E 5.



²⁶ Wilhelm Vossenkuhl, 'Das visuelle Erscheinungsbild', in Hans Hermann Wetcke (ed.), *in rotis* (Lüdenscheid, 1987), pp. 68 f., here p. 68; translated.

²⁷ Reprint of 'Studie 1400/0 – Erscheinungsbild der Lufthansa' (1962), in Müller and Weiland, *Lufthansa + Graphic Design* (see note 10), pp. 43–64, here p. 44.

²⁸ aicher, 'appearance' (see note 1), p. 152.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 153 f.

³⁰ As early as 1990, Aicher spoke of an 'ecological morality': *Ibid.*, p. 151.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 155.

³² Müller and Weiland, *Lufthansa + Graphic Design* (see note 10), p. 4.

³³ Tomás Gonda had run his own graphic design studio in Buenos Aires and came to Ulm in 1958 with the help of Tomás Maldonado. From 1962 to 1968, he designed the magazine *ulm*, the official organ of the HfG. See also Philip B. Meggs, *Tomás Gonda: A Life in Design*, exh. cat. Anderson Gallery, Richmond, VA (Richmond, VA, 1993).

10, 11 From the portfolio 'Entwicklung 5 an der Hochschule für Gestaltung Ulm' (Development 5 at the Ulm School of Design), 1963. Template and worksheet for applying individual elements of the visual appearance designed for Lufthansa by the E 5.

Das Arbeitsbuch Richtlinien und Normen E 5 besteht aus einzelnen Blättern, die in einem Ringbuch zusammengestellt sind. Die Blätter unterscheiden sich in Vorlagenblätter und Arbeitsblätter. Die Vorlagenblätter sind als Muster beschriftet und sollen dem Buch nicht entnommen werden. Die Arbeitsblätter sind in Blöcke und sind zur Entnahme bestimmt. Die Vorlagenblätter Format 148 x 200 mm, sind an der rechten Seite um 47 mm eingeklebt. Die Klappen liegen außen dem Titel und innen die Arbeitsblätter. Die Arbeitsblätter sind zur Entnahme zusammengelötet. Ein 10 x 20 cm großer Streifen trägt die Beschriftungen und ist bei Arbeitsblättern in der Mitte befestigt. Die Richtlinien und Normen werden einer Mischung der Lufthansa und ihrer Abnehmer als verbindliche Arbeitsunterlagen gegeben.




Entwicklung 5 an der Hochschule für Gestaltung Ulm Richtlinien und Normen für visuelle Gestaltungsaufgaben Deutsche Lufthansa AG, SS 1, Köln 1963



„Die zunehmende Erkenntnis über die Wirkbarkeit eines integrierten Erscheinungsbildes einerseits und die speziellen organisatorischen Gegenstände einerseits erfordern es heute, Regeln zu formulieren, die visuelle Gestaltungsaufgaben mit den Vorstellungen und Intentionen der Unternehmensleitung in Einklang zu bringen. ... Die vorliegenden Richtlinien und Normen sollen dazu dienen, den Ablauf von Gestaltungsaufgaben zu organisieren, zeichnerische Darstellungsbedingungen, Korrekturen und Kontrollen zu vereinfachen. ... Gegenstand der Richtlinien und Normen sind die meisten Elemente, die ein visuelles Erscheinungsbild ausmachen wie: zur Lösung von visuellen Gestaltungsaufgaben notwendig sind (Wörterwahl, Schriftzug, Schriften, Farbe, typografische Schemata). Die Anzahl der Elemente wurde reduziert und in ihrer Durchbildung vereinfacht. Die Elemente wurden in einer klaren systematischen Zusammenfassung gebracht, die es genügend Kombinationsmöglichkeiten eröffnet. ...“
Aus der Einleitung „Lufthansa, Richtlinien und Normen“, CGN SS 1, Mai 1963

Aus dem Arbeitsprogramm E 5 (Mai 1963)

01 Katalogisierung vorhandener visueller Informationsträger der Lufthansa und anderer Luftfahrtgesellschaften nach formalen, inhaltlichen und thematischen Funktionen) Kriterien, Zusammenfassung, Auswertung und Forderung

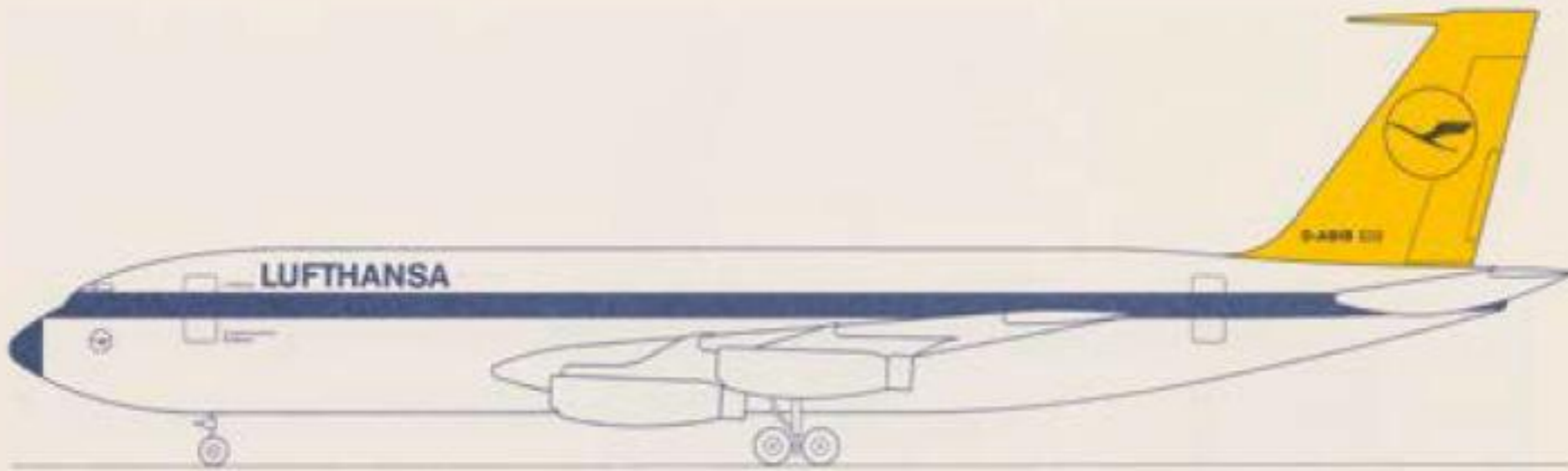
02 Katalogisierung aktueller Mittel (zeitlich) nach Informationsübermittlung, Zusammenfassung, Auswertung und Forderung (Tendenzen)

1 Präzisierung der Aufgabenstellung aufgrund genauerer Vorstellungen über die einzelnen Bereiche und ihre Rangordnungen

2a Ausarbeitung der Richtlinien und Normen für die einzelnen Medien visueller Kommunikation (Schrift, Zeichen, Farbe, Illustration u.ä.)

2b Ausarbeitung der Richtlinien und Normen für die einzelnen Gruppen der Informationsträger (Programme, Broschüren, Intranet, Plakate)

3 Darstellung der Richtlinien und Normen an einer Reihe von Anwendungsbeispielen (Tabellen, Papiere, Intranet, Plakate u.ä.)



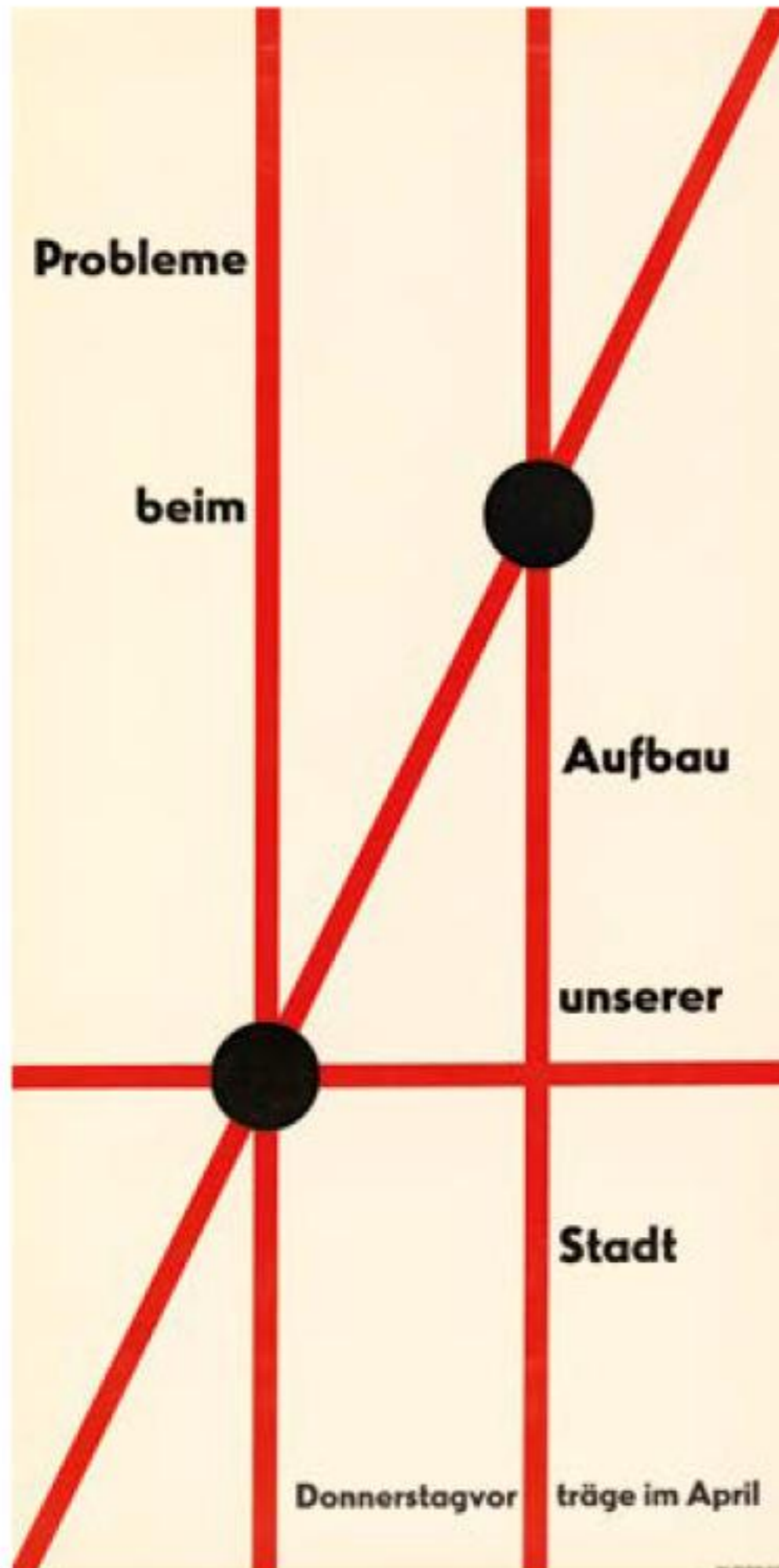
12 From the portfolio 'Entwicklung 5 an der Hochschule für Gestaltung Ulm' (Development 5 at the Ulm School of Design), 1963. Examples of the implementation of corporate colours, typeface and logo on Lufthansa aircraft.

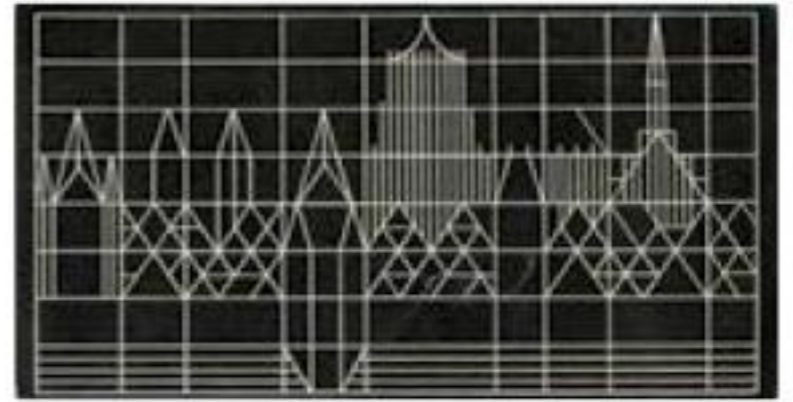
13 E 5, a photograph of a simulation using model airplanes and vehicles, 1962.



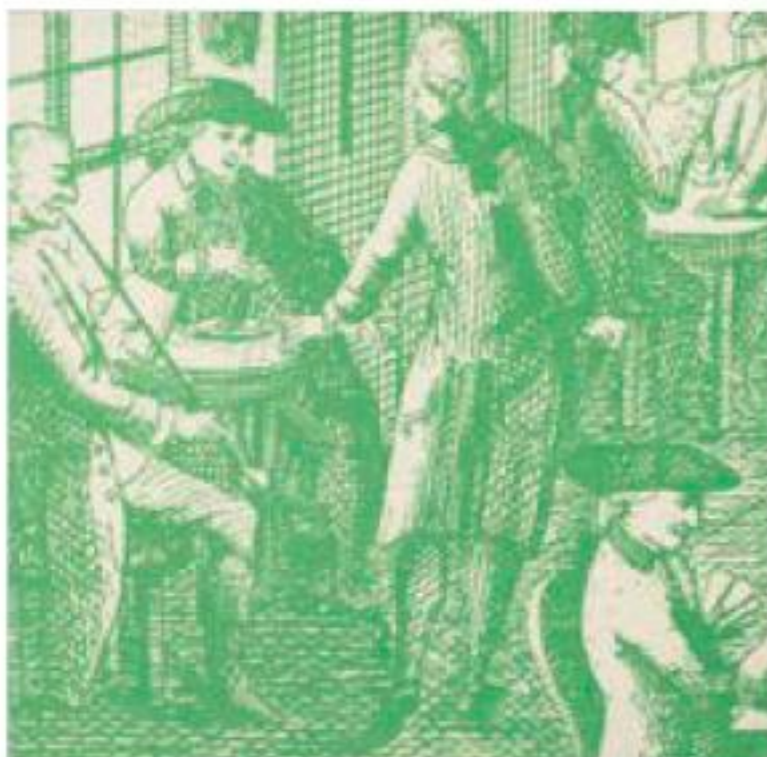


The Ulm Volkshochschule, founded by Inge Scholl and Otl Aicher, opened on 24 April 1946. In the years to follow, Aicher designed numerous posters in a standardised vertical format for the 'Donnerstagsvorträge' (Thursday lectures), which covered a wide range of scholarly, scientific, political and international topics.





Invitations to events as part of Ulm's 1100th anniversary celebrations in 1954. One of the first comprehensive projects Otl Aicher realised with a team at the HfG Ulm, where he was a lecturer in typography at the time. Aicher's interest in the history of the Middle Ages, which finds an early visual expression here, is also frequently reflected in his writings. In his 1985 memoirs *innenseiten des kriegs* (inside the war), he later described how much his youth in Ulm influenced him.





1100 Jahre Ulm

**Gesellschaftliches
Zusammensein
im Rathaus**



Samstag, 31. Juli
21 Uhr im Rathaus

Einlaßkarte

Wir wären dankbar, wenn diejenigen unserer Gäste, die bei dem Festakt im Münster am feierlichen Einzug teilgenommen haben, zunächst im großen Ratssaal Platz nehmen würden.

Beginning in 1984, a wide range of publications, annual reports and bulletins were designed as part of establishing the corporate identity of the bank WestLB. This also included numerical figures in a variety of colours and shapes that were used in signage throughout company buildings.

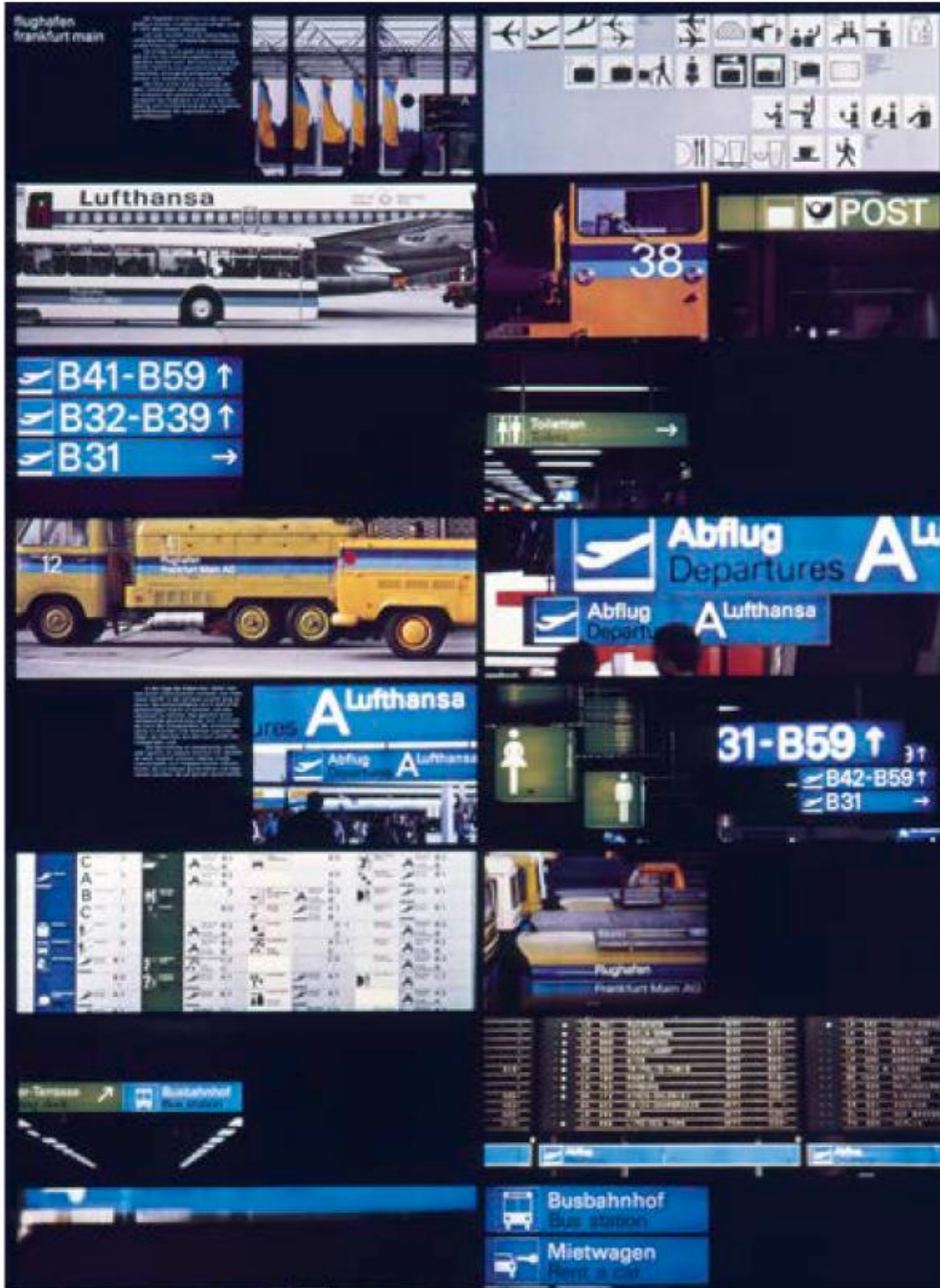


Dresdner Bank

The banking hall of Dresdner Bank in Frankfurt am Main, 1972. Dresdner Bank commissioned Otl Aicher in 1970 to redesign its visual appearance. In the cosy atmosphere of the spaces he designed (in which green was the predominant colour), bank employees and customers were to meet as 'trusted partners' – a radically new idea for the time but widely accepted today.

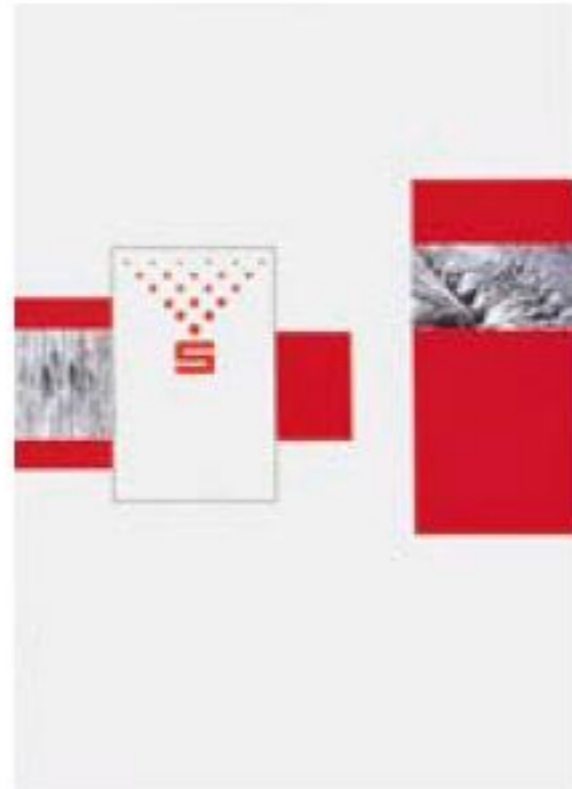


Starting in 1970, Otl Aicher developed a wayfinding system for Frankfurt Airport which, in turn, led to the creation of an extensive series of pictograms. Their relationship to the pictograms of the Munich 1972 Olympic Games, which Aicher and his team developed around the same time, is apparent.



Sparkasse

Otl Aicher began developing a uniform visual design concept for the Sparkasse savings bank finance group in 1969. Since then, the Sparkasse's logo has become one of the best-known and most memorable company emblems within Germany.



In 1974, Otl Aicher began developing the visual appearance of the lamp manufacturer ERCO. Numerous pictograms were also created in collaboration with ERCO for a wide variety of uses.



ERCO Tetrax

Un sistema di illuminazione a LED
a 2000 K di temperatura colore
con un'efficienza energetica del 90%
e un consumo di energia di soli
10 W per punto luce. Il sistema
è composto da un piedistallo
regolabile in altezza, un braccio
regolabile in lunghezza e un
cassa di illuminazione a LED.

Un sistema di illuminazione a LED
a 2000 K di temperatura colore
con un'efficienza energetica del 90%
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cassa di illuminazione a LED.

Design: Marco Balbo



ERCO Eclipse

Un sistema di illuminazione a LED
a 2000 K di temperatura colore
con un'efficienza energetica del 90%
e un consumo di energia di soli
10 W per punto luce. Il sistema
è composto da un piedistallo
regolabile in altezza, un braccio
regolabile in lunghezza e un
cassa di illuminazione a LED.

Un sistema di illuminazione a LED
a 2000 K di temperatura colore
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regolabile in lunghezza e un
cassa di illuminazione a LED.

Design: Marco Balbo



1972 Olympics



Kilian Stauss

Department XI of the Organising Committee and the
Visual Appearance of the 1972 Munich Olympic Games

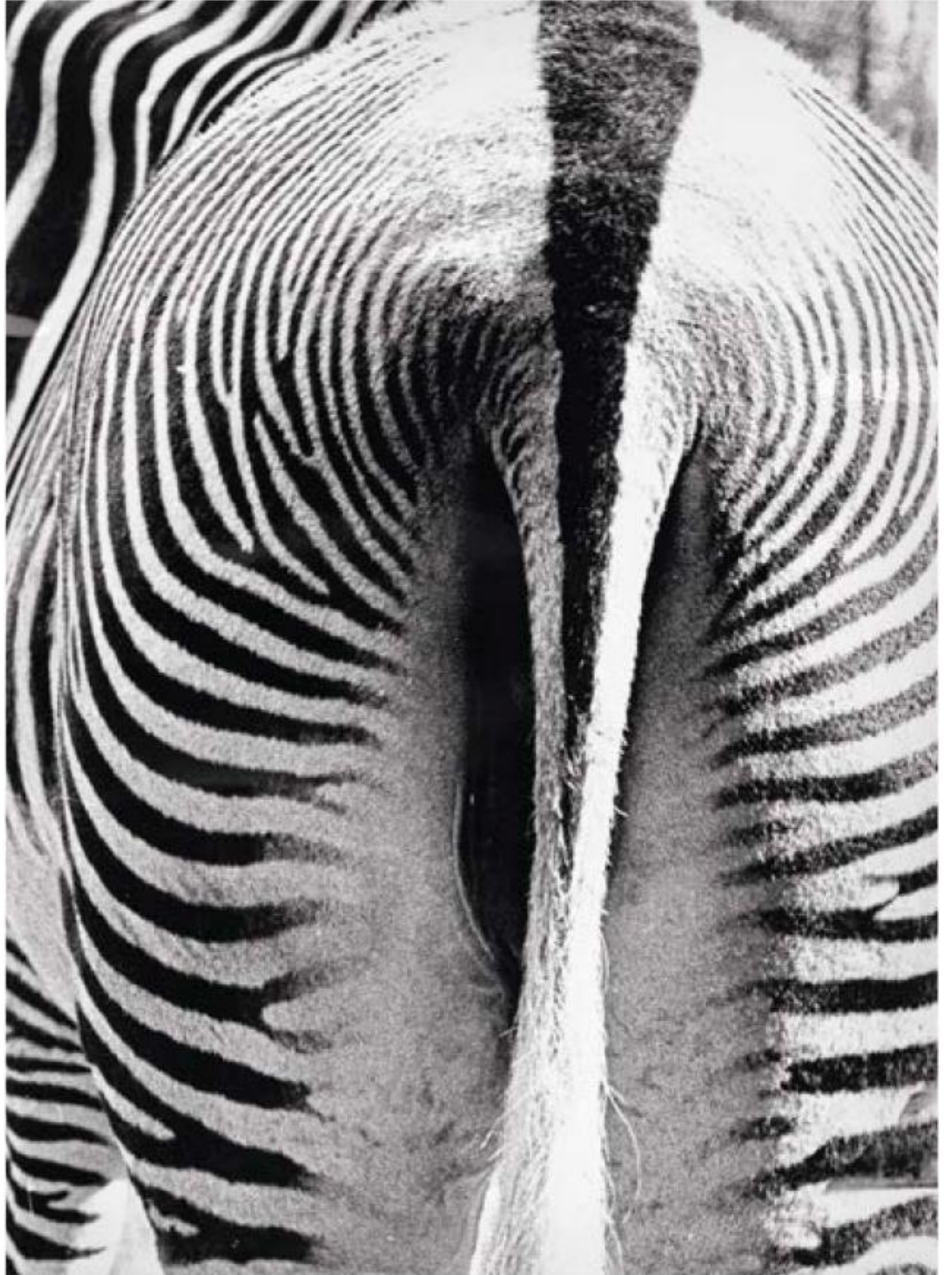
Simone Egger

The Built World and the Image of the City

11 Order in nature: a snowy forest with felled timber. Photo: Oti Aicher. The motif impresses through the rhythm of light and dark lines.



12 Order in the animal kingdom: zebra.
Photo: Oti Aicher. Aicher discovered the lively interplay of stipes on zebra fur during a visit to the zoo with his daughter.



34 Early designs for the side-by-side comparison of the formal idiom shared by Rotis Antiqua and Rotis Grotesk. The Antiqua type is still partly handwritten.

on the development of electric lighting in the 20th century and a technical manual. It quickly became clear that, in addition to Frutiger's Univers, another typeface was needed to give a book about the history of light an adequate typographic form and make the reading of the lengthier texts more pleasant. Monika Schnell, one of Aicher's employees at the time, remembers spending many days looking for a suitable partner typeface. For Aicher, classics such as Garamond, Baskerville and Caslon were out of the question because of their age, and the much-esteemed Times did not fit with Frutiger's own style. One morning Aicher came to Schnell's desk with the idea, 'we'll do something ourselves. If existing typefaces can't be combined, we'll develop a complex typeface ourselves that can fulfil what needs doing as far as corporate design is concerned.' The sketch, which Aicher had with him, already showed a basic letterform from which he had derived a grotesque and an Antiqua variant – he described his approach as 'brother and sister from the same family'.³⁸

Schnell had worked at the institute for analog studies in Rotis from 1984 and managed Aicher's commissions from ERCO and Druckhaus Maack. Before her time at Rotis, she was able to gain experience in the design and development of typefaces under Günter Gerhard Lange at H. Berthold AG in Taufkirchen. As such, it was relatively obvious that Aicher would involve her in the creation of a new typeface. Two years after the project began, Barbara Klein, who had also worked at



³⁸ Monika Schnell, 'die arbeit in rotis an der rotis', in *Zeitung zum 22. forum typografie, fachhochschule düsseldorf* (2007), essay 17; translated.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Aicher, *typographie* (see note 5), dust jacket.



H. Berthold AG, joined the team in 1987. They set about realising the project with clear ideas in mind. The intention was the creation of an individual and characterful typeface family that would stand out in formal terms from constructed typefaces and possess flowing qualities. A typeface family was produced over the course of four years, the starting point of which was a modified grotesque type that built a bridge towards Antiqua. During the development phase, Aicher always drew these two extremes in pairs next to one another (fig. 35). An identical 'skeleton' with basic letterforms of the same weight made up the foundation for the production of two further fonts, semi-grotesque and semi-Antiqua, which are positioned between grotesque and Antiqua.

'aicher's corrections to the forms that were taking shape', recalls Monika Schnell, 'had a language all of their own. letters were not supposed to look uniform, like "soldiers"; round letters were supposed to "hurry" and lead the eye to the next letter'.³⁹ Over forty years of practical work and experience in the design and use of typefaces went into the making of Rotis. Formal characteristics in the details of the individual letters as well as in the typeface are recognisable that can already be found in designs from Aicher's early days and are a result of the experience gained by using typefaces such as Univers and Times. Developed for two books, the Rotis typeface provided a legacy that he was happy to use for a few more years, because for Otl Aicher typography was 'the pictorial equivalent of language'.⁴⁰