

Jan Tschichold, A Dexterous Typographer

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"It is the master who establishes the rules and not the pupil, and the master is permitted to break the rules, even his own.

— Jan Tschichold

The following paper elaborates on the life and times of Jan Tschichold, who is widely known as a "master typographer." Tschichold was born in Leipzig, Germany, on 2nd April 1902, and his birth name was Johannes Tzschichhold. Tschichold became an expert typographer and also depicted the excellence and fine work in the field of calligraphy and book designing. Along with other works, he also designed marvellous posters and became a master and teacher of typography. Tschichold has written several books to transfer his learning to the readers. Moreover, Tschichold participated in a historical movement in the world of art known as "Elementary Typography" as a pioneer and leader.^[1] Through this movement, Tschichold and his alliances brought a substantial change, which was referred to as "Functional typography" and "New Typography." Sabon is one of the most famous and prominent typefaces developed and designed by Tschichold. The proficient master of typography died in 1974.

Fortunately, Tschichold was brought up in the closest proximity and atmosphere suitable for catering for the sense of typography. His father was a lettering artist, and by observing his father's work and activities, Tschichold too aspired to follow the lead. For this purpose, he enrolled at the Leipzig Academy and became a certified typographer. However, he experienced pressure from his parents, who asserted the vagueness of becoming an artist; his parents wanted him to join the illustration field as a career. According to them, being an artist is an occupation without fruition. Compellingly, Tschichold started to teach illustration; at this point, he was fourteen years old, and he continued to teach the subject for three subsequent years.

In 1923, there was an exhibition in Weimar which demonstrated Bauhaus; Tschichold also attended the exhibition and found Bauhaus captivating. It was the era when Tschichold had long quit conventional typography and supported the idea of innovative and creative new typography. The work of Marcel Breuer, Man Ray, Kurt Schwitters, Moholy-Nagy and Piet Zwart inspired him to the greatest extent. According to Tschichold, "The Bauhaus artists tended to use type as a component of abstract art rather than for communication. Their typography was wild, sensational, eye-catching, but in terms of legibility, impractical."^[2] It was the year 1968 when an exhibition of Bauhaus was held in London. In the subject exhibition, all the typography featured a sans-serif font, and capital letters were never used; it was an effective instance of the theory of new typography, which affirms the efficacy of ignoring practicality.

Tschichold's innovative concept of The New Typography advocates preciseness and lucidity by employing an asymmetrical typeface. Such type is managed by the content typography instead of

adhering to the traditional and formal typesetting. In due course, any shape of embellishing must be reserved to evade the peril of distraction from clear communication. According to Tschichold, all textual parts are strongly interconnected with each other through a rationale and explicit connection; such relations, in turn, elaborate the predetermination and values by implicating the medium of text. He says, "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."^[3]

Evidently, Tschichold was believed to be the pioneer and first-ever practitioner who attained training in the field of calligraphy and lettering at his earliest age. From this perspective, he was the first person who devised a philosophy of design, and according to his posts, he evaluated all relevant typographic problems. In the year 1925, Tschichold declared his personal proposition on the ideology of typographic design; and he published his first book in October 1925 in accordance with his position. Tschichold had a close working association with Paul Renner, the designer of Futura. At that time, Black letters were widely used by Germans, and new typography, as well as the development of san-serif, was a loud threat to the so-called cultural and traditional legacy of Germany. For this reason, Nazis arrested Tschichold and his wife in 1933 and raided his flat to seize all his work, including posters, publishing and other typographic projects "for the protection of the German people." Nevertheless, Tschichold somehow managed to escape and flee to Switzerland.

Tschichold is famous for his books named "*Die Neue Typographie*" (The New Typography) and "*Typographische Gestaltung*" (Typographic Design). These books were later included in the course of the standard syllabus of typographic students' education. In "*The New Typography*", Tschichold ascribes the underlying principles of standardization of typographic practices and their connectivity to the modern typo framework. Through his work and assertions, he rejected all other typefaces except san-serif, recommended homogenous-sized paper and established a precise guideline which elucidates the hierarchy of typography in the context of design. Text and typography are a fundamental part of today's life; magazines, banners, posters and many other mediums utilize the power of typography design to convey their messages in a unique and attractive fashion. The classist theory, which is incorporated into design theory, is the marvel of Tschichold, which pivots the designs along with Roman typeface and supports the copy blocks.

Work Cited

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2. Jeanne Willete, “*The Fate of Fonts, Part Five*” ArtHistoryUnstuffed, October 2017,
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3. Tschichold, Jan. *The New Typography* (Weimar and Now: German Cultural Criticism (2006) ↑