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May 1st, 2015
ARTH 3311

“How Should We Live? Propositions for the Modern Interior”

At the Museum of Modern Art there are a lot of wonderful exhibitions. The “How Should We Live? Propositions for the Modern Interior” exhibition in particular has all types of styles of art such as Constructivism, Futurism, Dada, Surrealism, International Swiss styles and many more. It is a great way to discover what types of designs are out there. Instead of reading from a textbook and trying to visualize from paper, you are in the real world experiencing posters and other types of art up close and personal. Constructivism and Dada are the main focuses that were in the exhibition. Constructivism is a style originated in Russia that has diagonals, big shapes that usually hold a red color to point out hierarchy, and overprinting. Dada is a style that originated in Switzerland which is way of designing something playfully. The International Typographic Swiss School style was a modernist way of designing that came from Switzerland as well and artists could design their work without being restricted to a line or a color or shape. Futurism is a way of designing that expresses movement and or violence which came from Italy. Surrealism started in the 1920s and was also important for the modernist movement. Surrealism is a way of expression through a super reality and art that contradicts itself.

Die Wohnung für das Existenzminimum (The dwelling for minimal existence) by Hans Leistikow was made in 1929. Hans Leistikow was a German designer. His design reflects Constructivism. The sharp diagonals, hierarchy and bold type are key signs of Constructivist influences such as El Lissitzky and Alexander Rodchenko. In relation to the exhibition as a whole I feel that this is a great example of a Constructivist design. It is more than a Constructivist design. I feel it tells a story of people existing at a minimum dealing with all of the problems of the world.

Ausstellung neue Hauswirtschaft (Exhibition of the new home economics) is a poster that was designed by Swiss artist Helmuth Kurtz in 1930. This is more of a

pictorial design to convey a message of possibly selling kitchenware to help the economy. Although the style of Dada is more random pictures cut out and pasted onto a plane in an unorganized but thought out way, I would classify this design as Dada because of the actual pictures placed in a collage manner and the overprinting as Constructivism. Artists during this time combined many styles of art and many characteristics in their designs because they figured they could make a better design by using their influences from all over the western world.

Das neue Heim (The new home) is a poster designed by another Swiss artist named Ernst Keller in 1928. Ernst Keller was an important designer during this time. He used grids to create most of his designs. Grids are a way to be organized but you can still be free in certain parts of your design. The International Typographic Style from the Swiss School was an important turn in the graphic design world. Without Ernst Keller the International Typographic Style may have not come about. There were no methods of designing a piece. The designs also included a sans serif type. A design did not have to have bold diagonals or huge text blocks in order to be considered De Stijl. This was a huge turnaround for the Modernist movement. I would say this piece had more De Stijl influence because of the text block in the upper corner.

Die Praktische Küche (The practical kitchen) poster was designed by Helene Haasbauer-Wallrath in 1930. Although history has not been the friendliest to women, there were a number of women who were graphic designers. This poster is very similar to the Contra-Construction Project by Theo van Doesburg in 1923. Theo van Doesburg was a Dutch artist who was the founder of De Stijl. This is a perspective drawing that became three dimensional. This poster has De Stijl influences mainly because of van Doesburg's teachings in Weimar, Germany. Helene Haasbauer-Wallrath wanted to show a message of kitchens and combined the idea with graphic design. The main important visual aspect of these types of designs are color. The artists mainly use reds, whites, blues, and yellows. Mainly the primary colors not because these colors were cheap to print, but more so to have a concentrated design.

Gaz cuit, chauffe, glace (Gas cooks, heats, chills) was a poster designed by Francis Bernard in 1928. He was a French artist. Francis Bernard wanted to promote the gas industry in France. This poster has influence in the Plakatstil style. Plakatstil was mainly used for advertisements and *Gaz cuit, chauffe, glace* was also supposed to bring attention to the gas needed to use in kitchen appliances. This style was greatly associated with Germany. This design contributes to the exhibition as a whole by showing the world how a Plakatstil design can still be relevant in today's art society. This design should also be considered as an Art Deco design because it is trying to portray a message.

To conclude, all of the artists shown in this exhibition were important to graphic design during the 1920s-30s and for the future of graphic design. Design in the lithographic, painting and print world started off being so rigid and had to look a specific way to be considered a type of style. As design progressed, so did the artists. Some artists stayed the same and had the same views as if something was Constructivism for example, it had to look like something out of an El Lissitzky collection. Many years later, designers decided to incorporate all types of art into their own art. Whether a design was used to make a political point or just to be creative, artists did not intend to steal anything and claim it as their own. All artists, man or woman, were important to the history of graphic design and it may have not been the same if some of these artists did not become designers.