

Reflection #2

Emil Ruder was a German graphic designer born in the early 20th century. His career was marked by his contribution to the field of typography, specifically as one of the progenitors of the Swiss Style, a design language that I would argue is at the heart of almost all modern visual design, not just on classic mediums like posters, covers, and logos, but also that of software, user interfaces, and interactive systems. One core tenet of Ruder's style is that of "connection"; the idea that each and every word, individual letter, and punctuation are no longer just separate pieces conveniently placed next to each other to create meaning, rather, every single visual element contributes to the message of the "whole" equally. Thus, we could see a heavy emphasis on the visual effect created by the "whole" through the arrangement and relation between every element instead of focusing on whether one specific word's placement made sense or not. This philosophy allowed Ruder to create very striking visuals using nothing but a few words in a sans-serif font, or a few letters, or even just a single letter, as seen in *Die gute Form* (1954). One important aspect of his work is the idea of the grid, also foundational to the Swiss Style, in which information is freed from the confines of linear experience (arranged purely from right to left, top to bottom). Now, everything can be organized in a fashion that can best emphasize/de-emphasize their relation and importance in the "whole". Making the "core letter" infinitely big and invading into other structures? Have paragraphs starting at the center to highlight or create a narrative flow? Arrange fonts themselves into a visual element that has its own meaning separate from the actual content of the words and letters? These are all things that are only possible through Ruder's artwork.

Finding one specific artwork to analyze is very hard as they're all equally interesting, but I've chosen *10 Zürcher Maler Kunsthalle Basel* (1957), a poster based on an earlier book cover done by Ruder. First off, the giant number 10 taking over half of the space is an instant attention grabber; its right alignment makes it so that the "1"

remains readable/distinct without its serif by not sticking it to the left border (and not boring unlike a center alignment would be). Looking down, the "Zurich painters" words spread across the entire width of the work also serve as a visual separator between the top (title) and the bottom (information) sections. Interestingly, the letter "ü"'s dots are being replaced by the letter "e". I am not familiar with German to know if it is meant to be a pun or not. However, the gap between the two words is deliberately designed—as demonstrated by the kerning of the rest of the letters; all minimal or close to non-existent—to create a sense of "sturdiness", given that otherwise, the word "maler" would be "floating" in the middle of the page. In fact, this idea exists throughout the work, as all components of the work are anchored to one of the borders of the work, most notably with the extended "1" to the top. Speaking of, the list of words in a bright orange-red is aligned perfectly with the "1" above it, completing the bottom part of the cross motif. I assume these are the names of the 10 painters. The color gave them a nice highlight and distinction from the title itself, while a small font size at the bottom of the hierarchy prevented them from drawing too much attention away. As mentioned before, I am personally a big fan of "doing more with less", and Ruder's work is perhaps one of the biggest influences on my own works.