

Zurich, 13 March 2012

Press release: The letter as art. The works of Imre Reiner
25. April – 22. Juni 2012
Opening: Tuesday 24 April 2012, 18.00

Have you ever noticed while reading a text that letters are actually mysterious and meaningful emblems? Written characters are symbolic images with great artistic potential. In a limited context they can be altered and through their design exercise a decisive influence on the content and atmosphere of what is being read.

The monograph exhibition of the works of Imre Reiner (1900-1987) presents this phenomenon in print. It offers us the opportunity to study images of typefaces and investigate their potential outside the context of textual meaning. This Hungarian-Swiss artist and typographer came into contact with font design during his youth in former Austria-Hungary, where he was engaged in carving names onto gravestones. During his training as a graphic artist in Stuttgart after the First World War he developed his first fonts. Driven from Germany by the anti-Semitic climate, he settled in Tessin at the beginning of the 1930s. There he worked tirelessly on his extensive projects until going blind in 1982. His works comprise not only graphic art but painting, book design (typography) and theoretical discourse.

The focus of the exhibition is letters and books in which Imre Reiner embedded illustrations into written characters such that two elements seemingly foreign to each other by nature merge effortlessly and artistically. Reiner's investigations into the manifold design possibilities of the alphabet are another central aspect of his work. Using countless colour variations he reduced letters to their pictographic, abstract forms, shifting the emphasis away from their meaning. In his skilful wood engravings and experimental etchings he often integrated fragments of written characters as structural elements, such that figurative and/or abstract representations in fine gradations of black and white emerge.

In Imre Reiner's search for the common ground between image and script the moving line is integral. In relation to the surface it creates a strong tension, simultaneously suggesting both movement and depth. The letters in the image also link Reiner's works to the conceptual level: when we regard them we sway back and forth between comprehending a text and looking at a picture. The end result is that we marvel at the hidden potential of this rare type of imagery.

For further information and visual materials:

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