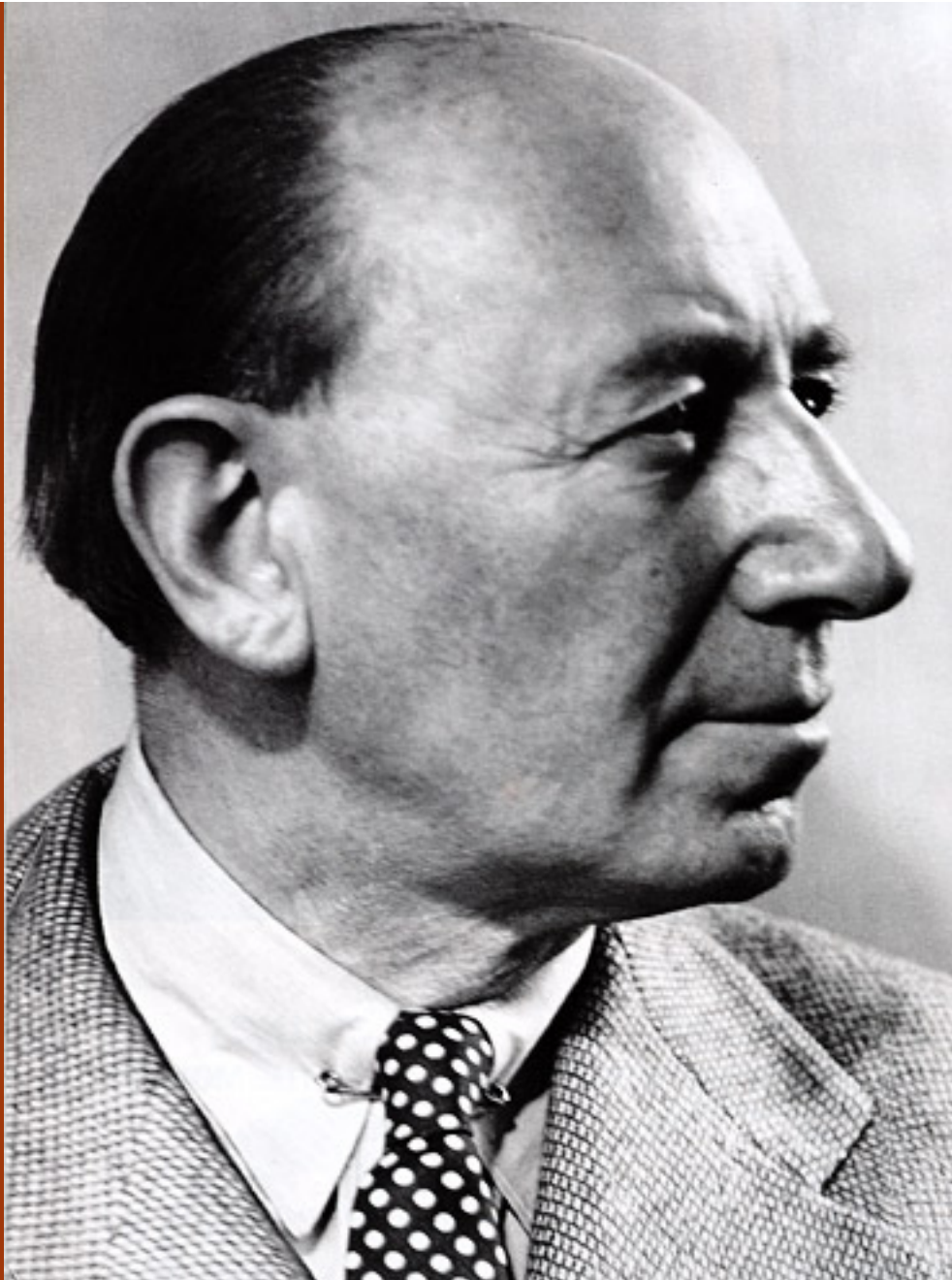


“1”

Bernhard Modern Std

Lucian Bernhard was one of this century's eminent graphic designers. Bernhard Modern is his enduring masterpiece of type design. It is considered a decorative and display font. *"My aim was to get all the spice and contrast into the contour... without counting on the ink spread." - Lucian Bernhard*



*"You see with your eyes, not with your brain. What you do with your hands should express the physical process and should never be mechanical."*

— Lucian Bernhard

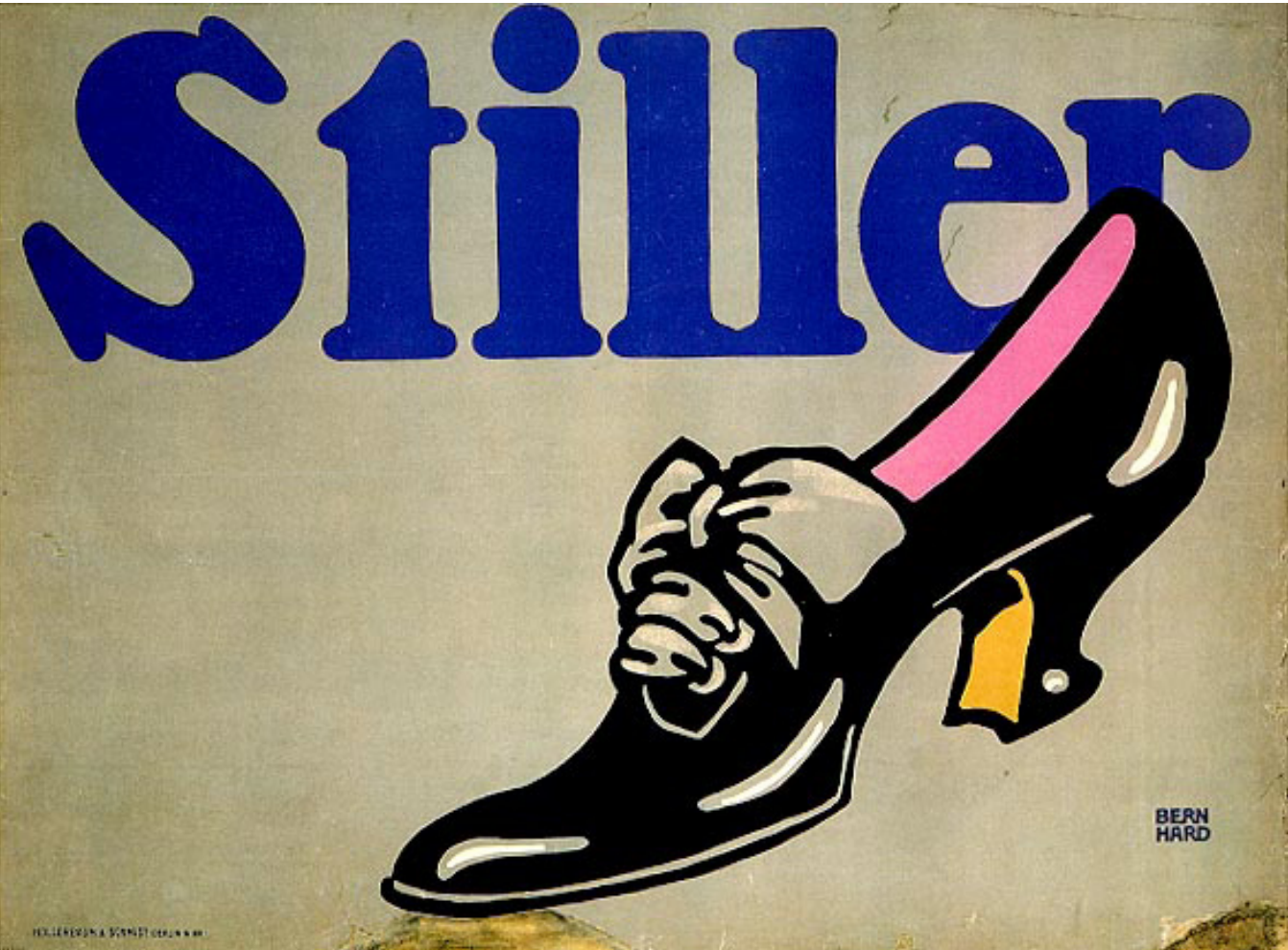
# The life and work of Lucian Bernhard.

**Lucian Bernhard** was a German graphic designer, type designer, illustrator, painter, teacher, interior designer, and artist during the first half of the twentieth century. He was born in Stuttgart, Germany on March 15, 1883 as Emil Kahn, but changed his name in 1905. The family of typefaces he developed is called Bernhard.

Mostly self-taught, Bernhard studied briefly at the Munich Art Academy before going to Berlin in 1901. He was influential in helping create the design style known as Plakastil (Poster Style), which used reductive imagery and flat-color as well as Sachplakat (Functional Poster), which restricted the image to simply the object being advertised and the brand name. These styles of poster design incorporated brief powerful statements with a single image and generated their own form of display lettering.

Bernhard was a professor at the Berlin School of Arts & Crafts. In 1923, he emigrated to the United States, where he lived until his death on May 29, 1972. Bernhard had three children - Karl, Manfred and Ruth, a renowned photographer.



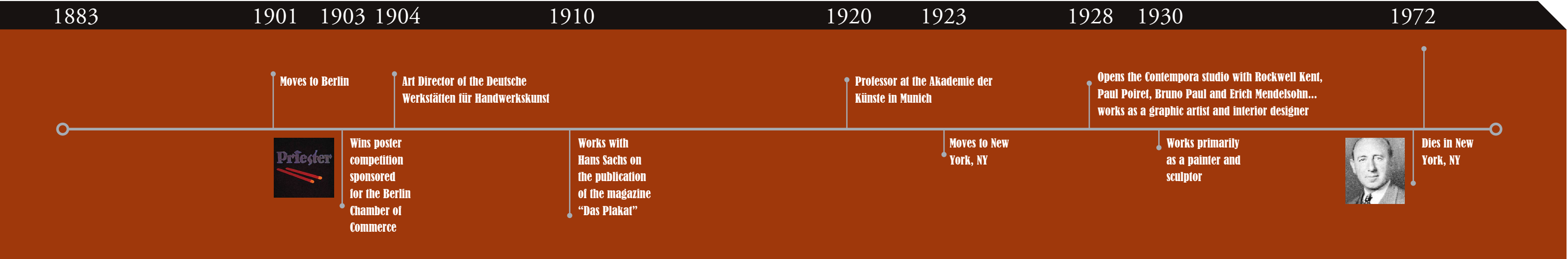


Lucian Bernhard, poster for Stiller shoes, 1912. Against the brown background, dark letterforms, and black shoe, the inside of the shoe is intense red and the front of the heel is bright orange.

Bernhard’s father was a physician and wanted him to follow a career in medicine. But growing up in Stuttgart, Germany, Bernhard fell in love with drawing and became fascinated with letters. Unwilling to obey his father’s wishes, Bernhard ran away from home and never went back. Since Bernhard deliberately invented many of his early biographical accounts, it is hard to know for sure what happened to him after he ran away from home.

As his son Karl explains, Bernhard believed that the actual facts of his youth had little relevance in judging his adult life and work, so he enjoyed toying with the details in his life, revising his stories depending on his audience of mood. One version describes Bernhard sleeping in sewer pipes above ground and begging for or stealing food in Berlin. Another account talks about Bernhard running errands for a local political caricaturist in Berlin in exchange for work space in his studio. Apparently, it is this unnamed caricaturist that encourages Bernhard to enter his first poster contest.

Poster competitions were regularly sponsored by Berlin business establishments as a way to discover and recognize new talent



for the expanding advertising industry. The 1905 poster competition was sponsored by Preister Match Company. Bernhard entered this competition with a poster containing only red matches with yellow tips and the brand name, Preister. This particular poster is an example of modern graphic design. Its composition is so stark and its colors so startling that it captures the viewer's eye in an instant. The **persuasive simplicity** of Bernhard's poster was refreshing compared to all the advertising posters prior to 1905 that were extremely wordy and ornate in nature.

The most important judge of the competition was Ernst Growald, sales manager for the Hollerbaum & Schmidt lithography firm (widely known as Berlin's leading printer of advertising posters). Upon viewing Bernhard's poster design, Growald exclaimed, **"This is my first prize. This is genius!"** At only eighteen years old, Bernhard was named winner of the competition. He also gained a long-term benefactor when Growald became his agent and broker. Never again did Bernhard have to face unemployment.

Bernhard capitalized on the success of his Preister poster and used it as a model for all other work. The work he did for clients such as Manoli Cigarettes, Stiller Shoes and Priester Matches, is noted for its simple images and **dramatic use of flat color against pale, monochromatic backgrounds.**

Despite Bernhard's self-taught ways, he had many influences and inspirations that helped him design. His formative years coincided with the explosion of Art Nouveau in France and Jugendstil in Germany. When Bernhard was a child, he visited Munich's Gladpalast, where he saw a major exhibition of European Art Nouveau applied arts. Specifically, the progressive style of the Beggarstaff brothers and British artists William Nicholson and James Pryde is said to have had a strong effect on Bernhard's poster making.

By age nineteen, Bernhard had opened his first studio, where he hired additional artists for assistance. Within ten years, Lucian had a larger, more elegant studio that eventually grew to employ thirty artists and assistants.

During World War I, Bernhard was drafted into the army. Rather than accepting a government-issued uniform, he designed his own and had a tailor manufacture the garment. Although Bernhard went through the trouble of designing his own uniform, he wasn't in the line of fire for too long. His company commander, who in civilian life had also been involved in the graphic arts and knew and admired Bernhard's works, insisted that he take a home-guard assignment making propaganda posters in support of the German war effort. Bernhard therefore spent the rest of his military service working safely at home.

Not only was Bernhard a painter and ground-breaking posterist, he also excelled at logo, trademark, package,

alphabet, textile, furniture, and interior design. In Berlin and New York during the first decades of the 20th century, Bernhard developed some of the most identifiable American business advertising and trademarks for clients such as Amoco, White Flash Gasoline, Radio City Music Hall, Marlboro Shirts, the Theater Guild, Westinghouse, Cat's Paw and Exlax. He also designed the lettering of brand and corporate names for large firms like Kaffee HAG and Pelikan. In 1914, Bernhard designed a poster for Bosch, featuring a greatly simplified sparkplug topped by the spark it generates with "Bosch" in densely outlined lettering.



In 1920, Bernhard was appointed as the first professor of poster design at the Berlin Royal Academy. He was also co-founder of the magazine Das Plakat, a predecessor of Gebrauchsgraphik. Bernhard moved to New York in 1923 where he joined with Rockwell Kent to establish the New York design company Contempora...all while maintaining his Berlin practice. He continued his poster designs and teaching work at the Art Students League and New York University.

As time passed, Bernhard realized his attempts to convince Americans of the wonders of modern design were futile. American advertising was ruled by the copywriter. Moreover, advertisers believed that Bernhard's work was ahead of its time. Although

his German style was not appreciated in New York, Bernhard refused to compromise to conform. Until 1927, he worked exclusively on interior and furniture design for wealthy Manhattan clients. After 1930, Bernhard turned his attention to sculpture and painting. In 1932, Bernhard's wife and sons, Karl and Manfred, came to New York from Germany (his daughter, Ruth, from a previous marriage, was already in the US). Though they did not live with their father, they worked with him as assistants at the studio.

During World War II, Swiss poster design grew a massive appetite for Bernhard's Sachplakat. Drawn to the use of a universal language of symbols, the Swiss were also attracted to the sense of precision, minimalism, and clean typography. Sachplakat was exactly what Swiss Design looking for. Graphic designers Niklaus Stoeklin, Karl Birkhauser, Herbert Leupin and Donald Brun adopted Sachplakat as the style for their own posters.

Bernhard's success as a poster designer enabled him to successfully bridge into type design, furniture design, fashion design and packaging design. Over the next few years, he was involved in several projects including the design of 36 different typefaces:

### Flinsch Foundry in Frankfurt

Bernhard Antiqua (1913)

### Bauer Type Foundry

Bernhard Fraktur (1912-1922)







## Resources

<http://www.plakatkontor.de>

<http://www.msn.com>

<http://images.google.com>

<http://www.google.com>

<http://www.aiga.org>

<http://www.wikipedia.org>

<http://www.myfonts.com>

<http://www.linotype.com>

<http://www.drleslie.com>

<http://www.ifa.de>

<http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk>

<http://www.identifont.com>

<http://www.angelfire.com>

<http://www.lucian-bernhard.com/>

*"If I am going to be  
forced to specialize, I  
will do it with painting."*

— **Lucian Bernhard**



Lucian Bernhard, poster for a war-loan campaign titled "The Conclusion," 1915. A sharp militaristic feeling is amplified by the Gothic inscription, "This is the way to peace - the enemy wills it so! Thus subscribe to the war loan!"