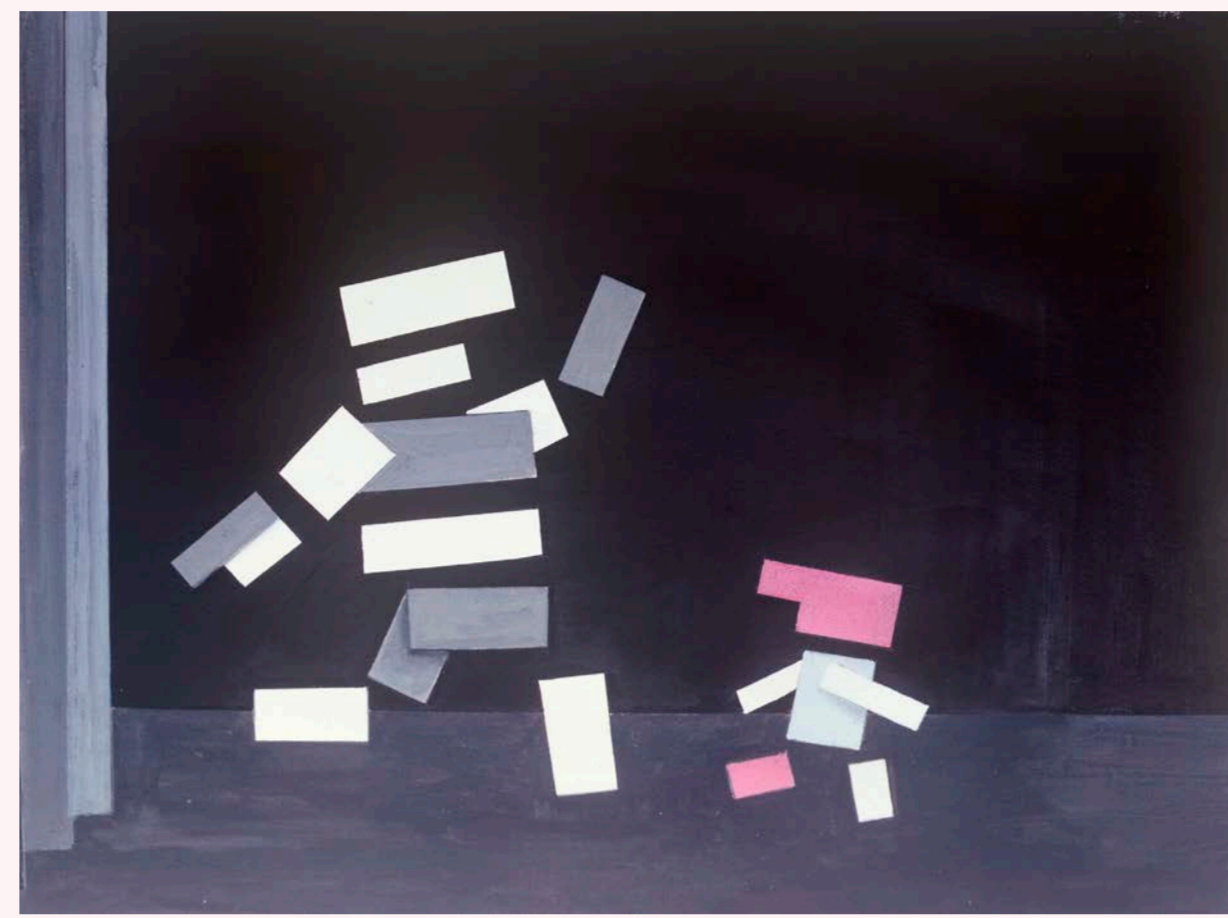


george adams

A Bauhäusler who came
to live near Belsize Park

Exhibition Credits
Research, writing and design:
John Allan, Tom de Gay.
With thanks to Sara Adams.



Studies for the *Das mechanische Ballett*, 1923.
Designed in collaboration with fellow students Kurt Schmidt and Friedrich Wilhelm Bogler, *Das mechanische Ballett* was an avant-garde performance, following Oskar Schlemmer's *Triadisches Ballet* of the previous year. Work on the ballet commenced just a few weeks prior to its première at the 1923 Bauhaus exhibition.



bauhaus beginnings

Austria, Germany, Spain and England

Early life

Georg Anthony Adams-Teltscher (1904–83) was born in Purkersdorf, a municipality in Sankt Pölten-Land District of Vienna, in the state of Lower Austria. In early years he was named Teltscher after his Austro-Hungarian father, an importer of mother-of-pearl, but he would later anglicise his forename and adopt the surname of his American mother Mary Adams after he arrived in Britain.

“What we wanted was to get away from any stylistic efforts and free ourselves from preconceived shapes. In short we wanted what was later to be termed functionalism.”

George Adams-Teltscher, on forming the design philosophy that would characterise the Bauhaus, rejecting both Expressionism and De Stijl.

The Bauhaus and beyond

He embarked on his design education at the Arts and Crafts School in Vienna where he studied from 1919–20. It was here that he encountered an exhibition of works of Paul Klee, inspiring him to enrol at the Bauhaus, founded by Walter Gropius in Weimar, which he attended until 1923. After taking the six-month preliminary *Vorkurs*, he joined the paint workshop led by Wassily Kandinsky, studied murals and stage design with Oskar Schlemmer, and attended extramural lectures by Theo van Doesburg. He joined the student ‘opposition’ *KURI* group (Constructive, Utilitarian, Rational, International) which broke with the institution’s Expressionist agenda, moving it towards the functionalism for which it would soon become renowned.

A pivotal moment in the Bauhaus’s turbulent development was the 1923 exhibition – effectively a manifesto intended to crystallise the school’s objectives. Teltscher contributed exhibition invitations and co-created *Das mechanische Ballett* – a radical geometric ensemble of costume and set design.

Though remaining connected with the school, Teltscher ceased to be a registered Bauhaus student when the institution and its Bohemian community moved from the staid city of Weimar to its new purpose-built home in Dessau in 1925.

Teltscher became a theatre set designer in Vienna, being the first designer to employ the technique of news teleprinting across the set, as featured in *Baal* the earliest dramatic work of Berthold Brecht. He also worked with the notable graphic artist Julius Klinger, who became his mentor during the mid-1920s and taught him the craft of graphic design.

Berlin to Barcelona

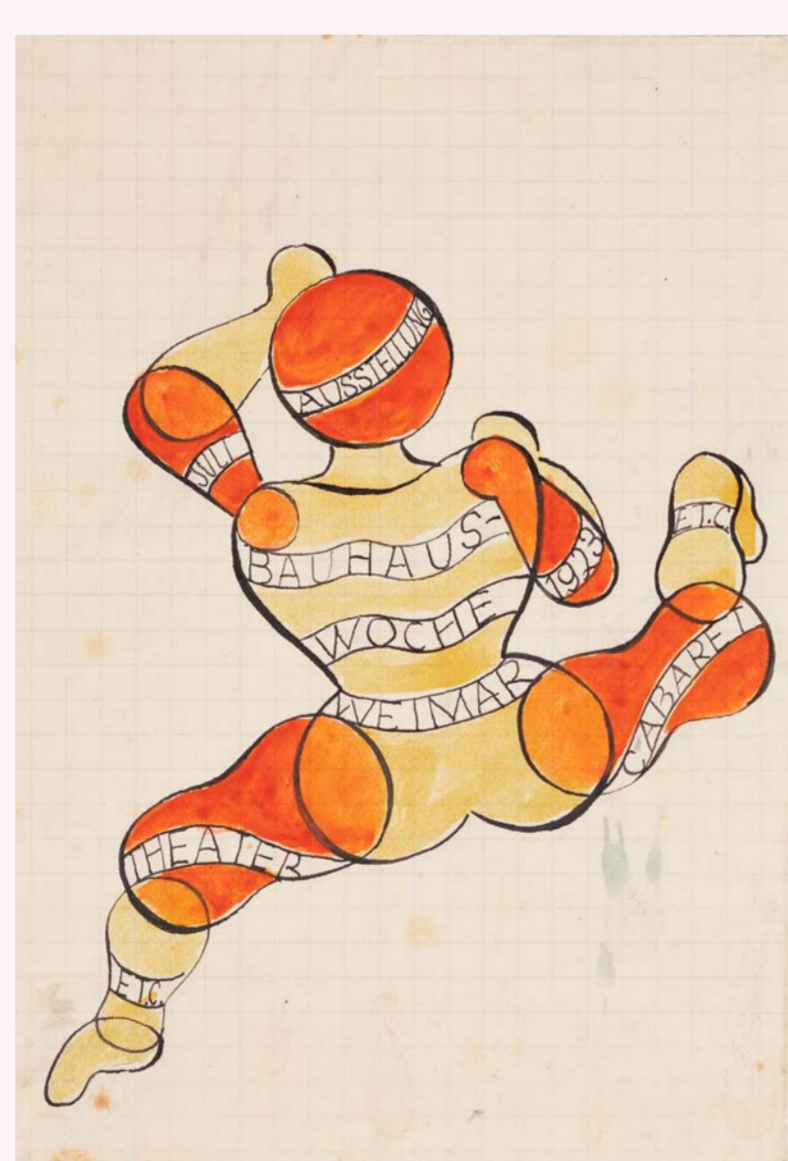
Between 1926–9 Teltscher was engaged in graphic design and advertising work in Hamburg and Berlin, where he was instrumental in promoting a modern design ethos, moving away from traditional blackletter script. From 1934–6 he was posted by his German employers to Barcelona, where he became involved with left-wing politics, joining the Austrian division of the International Brigade in the Spanish Civil War from 1936–8. His photographs of the period record scenes of Mediterranean relaxation punctuated by interventions of shocking brutality.



← George in Lloret, Spain, c.1936
↑ Scene from the Spanish Civil War, c.1936

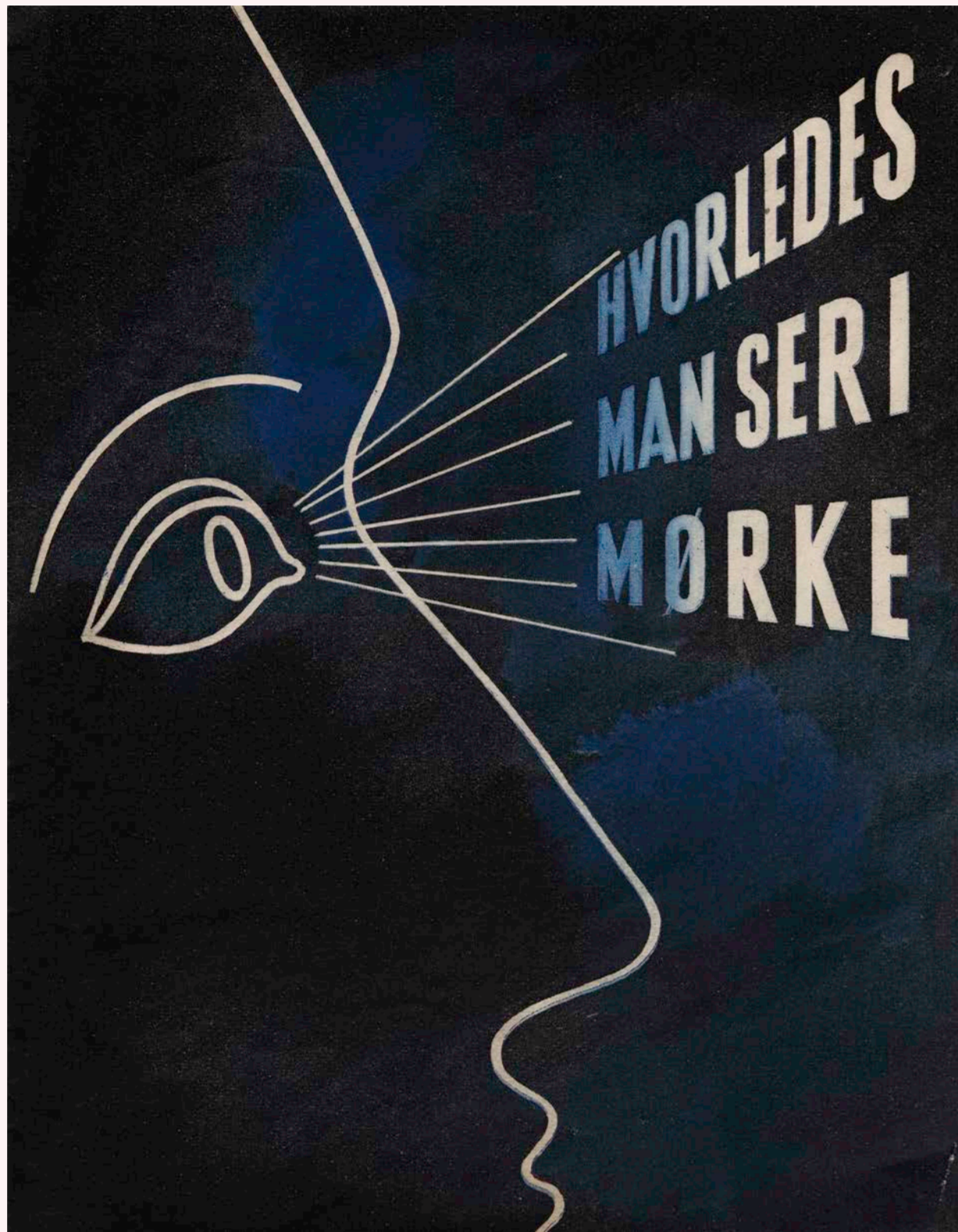
Escape to England

In 1938 as war loomed in Europe, Teltscher smuggled himself out on the underside of a train, arriving via Holland in London where he was received by his former English nanny, Maggie Bradbury, a northern railway worker’s wife who had looked after him when he was a boy in Vienna. George Adams, as he would now call himself, lived in King’s Road, Chelsea, undertaking graphic design work of various kinds. He contributed to the exhibition *Bauhaus: 1919–1928* which took place at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, 1938. Following the *Anschluss* in 1938 and refusing to comply with the requirement to obtain a German passport, George destroyed his Austrian passport and became stateless.



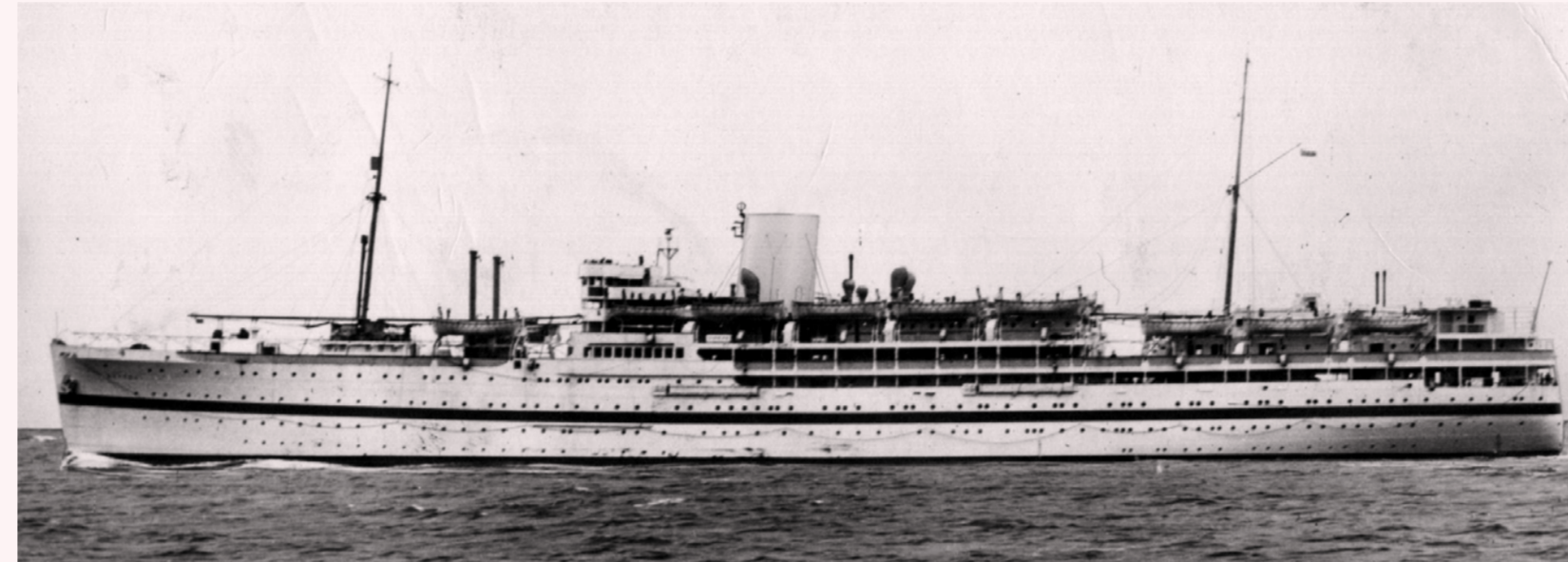
↑ **Bauhaus Woche Weimar (Bauhaus week Weimar), 1923,** 103×149mm, ink on paper

← **Auf nach Weimar! (Off to Weimar!), 1923,** 180×288mm, ink on paper
Studies for postcards promoting the 1923 Bauhaus exhibition



← *Hvorledes man ser i mørke*
(How to see in the dark),
pamphlet c.1941-5, 140 x 107mm
British Army propaganda
distributed to occupied Denmark

→ *View of Hay
Camp boundary,*
1941, 372 x 272mm,
watercolour



← *HMT Dunera*
The ship transported some 2,000 male
German and Austrian mainly Jewish
refugees aged between 16 and 45,
who had escaped from Nazi occupied
territories; also on board were 200
Italian POWs and 250 Nazis.

The war years

Punishment and propaganda

Internment in Australia

George was declared an enemy alien in 1940 following the outbreak of war, and was duly arrested by the same policeman with whom he used to enjoy a beer. He was one of numerous deportees to be despatched to Australia on an infamous journey aboard the HMT *Dunera*. Arriving on 6th September 1940, after a perilous 57 day voyage in deplorable conditions and subjected to relentless brutality by the ship's guards, he was interned at the Hay camp situated in desert terrain in New South Wales. In this fortuitous assignment to Australia, however, he escaped the contemporaneous fate of *SS Arandora Star* (and other deportee ships of the Blue Star line) directed to Canada only to be torpedoed *en route* with almost total loss of life.

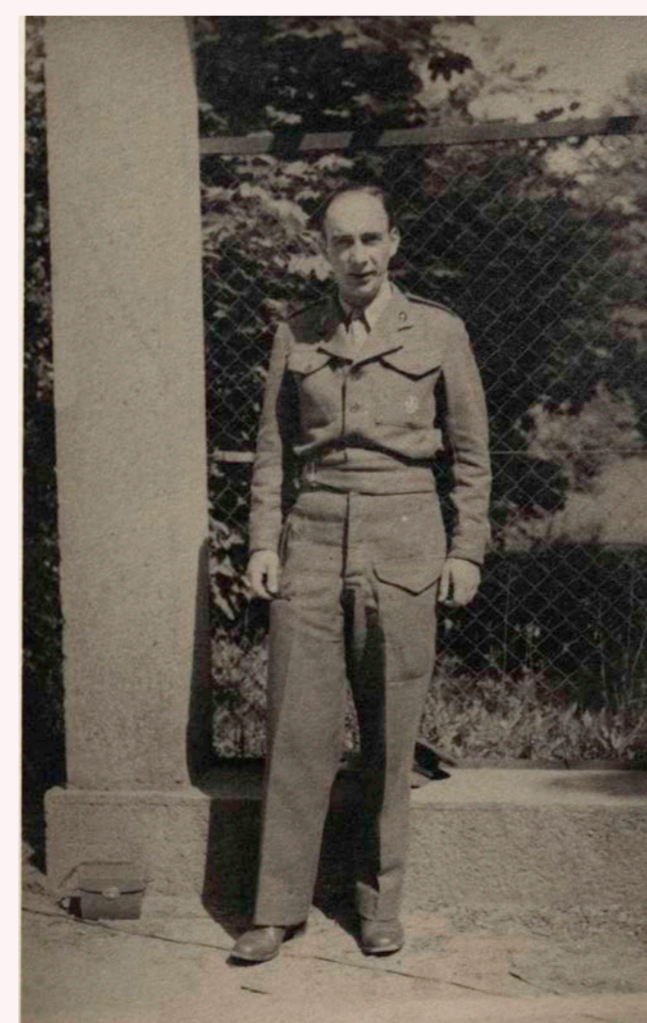


↑ *Hay Internment Camp bank notes,*
1941, 103 x 149mm
Currency produced by internees for use within
the camp community. George's sardonic
humour is evident in several details, including
the meticulous outline of barbed wire which
conceals the circular maxim '... we are here
because we are here because, etc...' There were
three denominations, Sixpence, One Shilling and
Two Shillings. The notes were in circulation for
just three months from March to May 1941, when
the plates were confiscated by the Australian
Government on the basis that they were so
convincing in their design, they risked being used
outside the camp.

The Dunera Boys

While awaiting release, the 'Dunera Boys' developed a rich cultural and intellectual programme at the camp, giving concerts and establishing an unofficial university. A small group of strictly Orthodox Jews even managed to organise a kosher kitchen. George turned his graphic skills to the production of Camp Seven bank notes for use as 'toy currency' within the camp community. The opportunity to spend time outside the camp painting a 'No Parking' sign for the Australian Army was exploited to the full – painting one letter per day, he extended the commission to three weeks. His numerous sketches and paintings of the camp provide a vivid historical record of the experience.

Eventually the injustice of the internees' situation was realised by the Australians and they were gradually released. Many stayed in Australia and went on to contribute greatly to the country's artistic and cultural development. But George, who had developed a liking for British values and customs, returned to London.



← *Adams in British
Military uniform, c.1941*

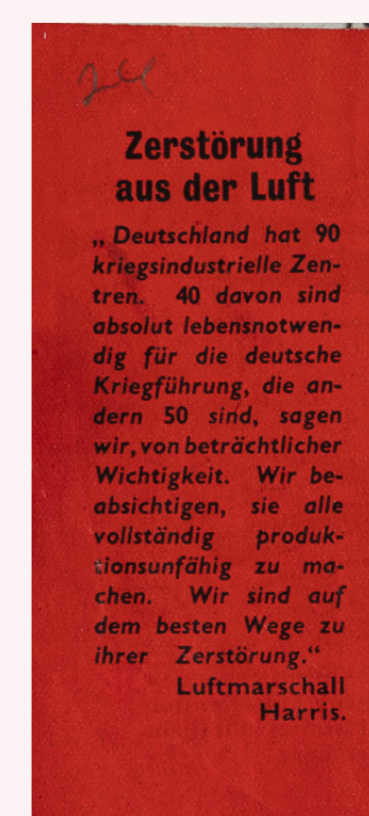
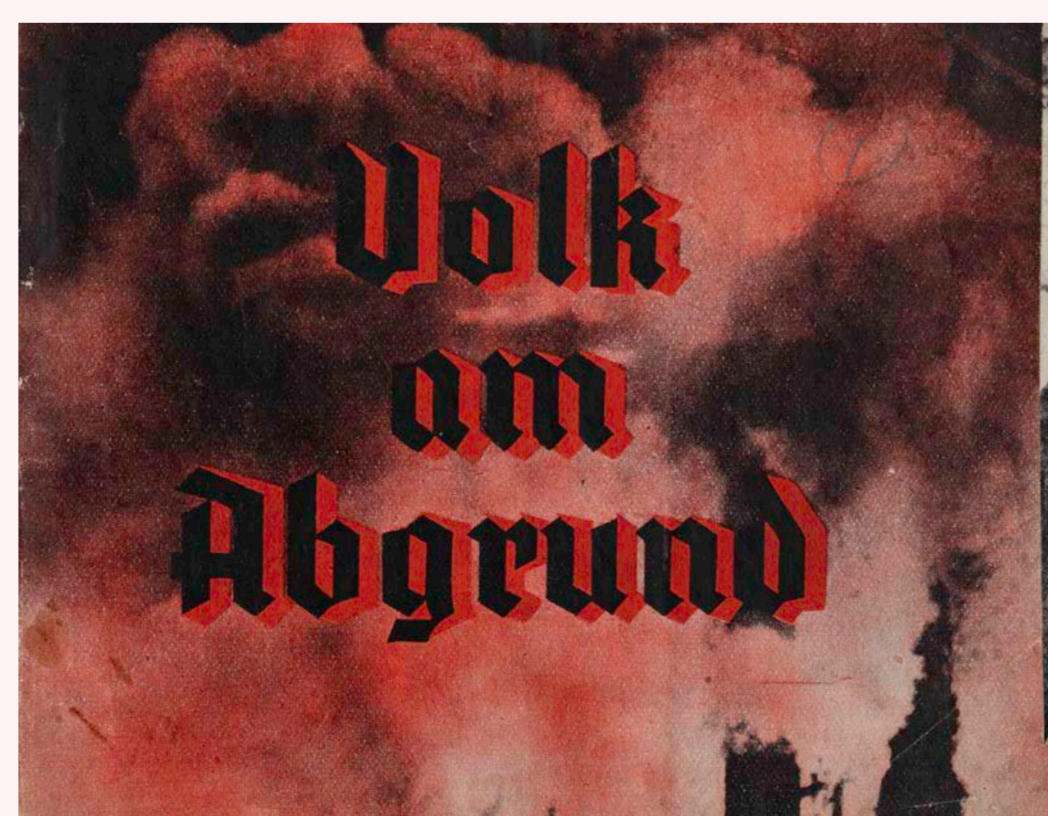
↓ *Volk am Abgrund*
(People on the brink),
pamphlet, c.1943-5,
140 x 107mm
British Army
propaganda distributed
in Germany, depicting
'Destruction from
the air'

Designer at war

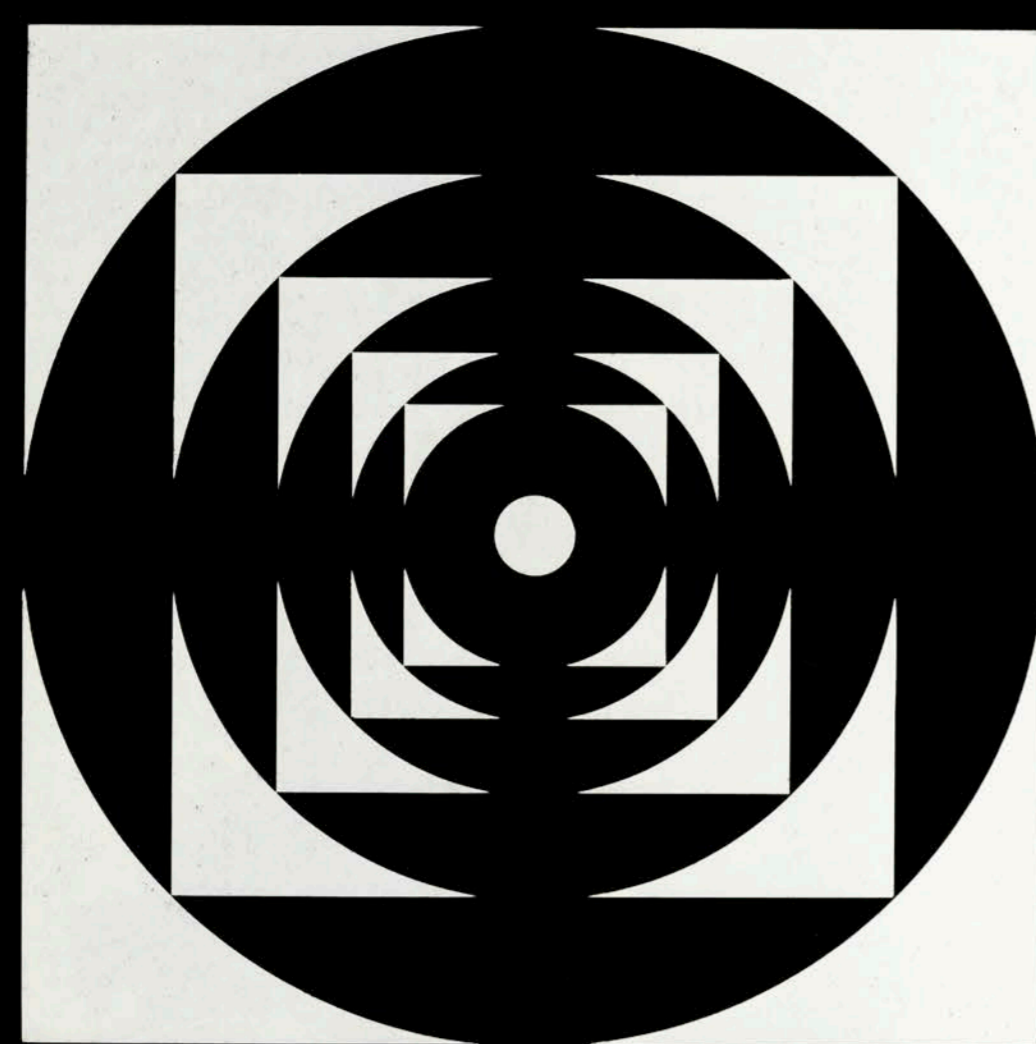
Adams arrived back in England in 1941 and made contact with Bruno Adler, a German art historian who had lectured at the Bauhaus. Adler helped Adams find book design work, introducing him to Bruce Robertson, founder of the graphic and book design firm Diagram. Adler also wrote for BBC Radio's German Service at Bush House, producing regular anti-Nazi propaganda broadcasts and enlisted Adams as a voice actor, where his ability to mimic German regional accents proved invaluable. These subversive broadcasts became extremely popular in Germany, but followers of the programmes were subject to severe penalties if caught listening.

He attended an interview on a Friday afternoon and was parachuted from an aircraft the following Monday

Through Adler's contacts Adams applied for enrolment in the British Army where he believed his language skills could be put to further use. He attended an interview on a Friday afternoon and was duly despatched to Sussex to be parachuted from an aircraft the following Monday. His time in service involved several deployments behind enemy lines – episodes he was reluctant to talk about. He was engaged in drafting maps for the Army and designed numerous propaganda leaflets, characterised by their impact and inventiveness with restricted means.



the design department
of the london school
of printing and
graphic arts
invites you to
an exhibition
of photographs
by



bill brandt

back hill clerkenwell road e.c.1 28 march to 8 april monday to friday 10-7

←
Bill Brandt exhibition poster, 1950s, 523 x 775mm, white screenprint on black paper
The geometric motif is an abstraction of the camera bellows. The exhibition was held at the London School of Printing and Graphic Arts where Bill Brandt's brother (and Bauhaus associate) Rolf taught.



↑
Festival of Britain souvenir, 1951
Folding ballerinas based on Abram Games' Festival Star motif.

batting for britain

Typography and teaching

Adams was a key figure in disseminating Bauhaus ideas and pedagogy – focussing on discovering one's abilities and the nature of materials

Post-war publishing

After the end of the war in 1945, George, now a naturalised British subject, would formally change his name by deed the following year to Adams. He became art director for the periodical *Future* and the travel magazine *Go*. He produced a range of graphic design work for the Festival of Britain, 1951. Thereafter he became closely involved with the publisher Thames & Hudson, founded in 1949 by fellow Austrian Walter Neurath who came from Vienna in 1938, and his German wife Eva. Over the course of this association Adams proceeded to design some 500 books and book jackets.

Teacher

In 1951 Adams was appointed to the post of senior lecturer at the London School of Printing and Graphic Arts, which became the London College of Printing in 1962. During his long-standing engagement with this institution he became a key figure in disseminating Bauhaus ideas and pedagogy – focussing on discovering one's abilities and the nature of materials. He also served as an external examiner at many universities and other schools of graphic design and was made a Fellow of the Society of Industrial Artists and Designers.

Adams played a prominent part in the major retrospective *50 Years Bauhaus* at the Royal Academy, London in 1968 where his designs for *Das mechanische Ballett* were exhibited.



↑
Go... The International Travel Magazine, 1950, 257 x 351mm



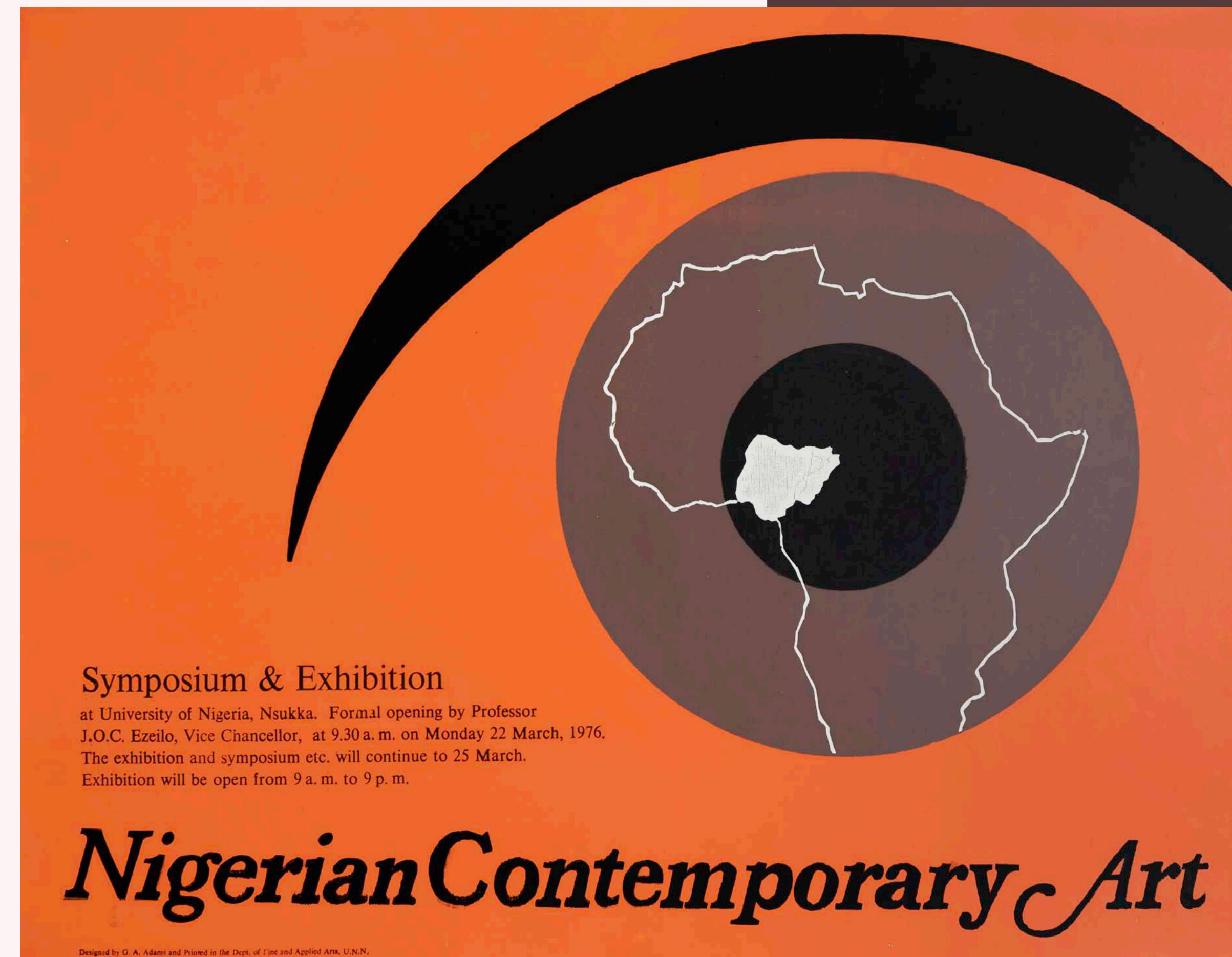
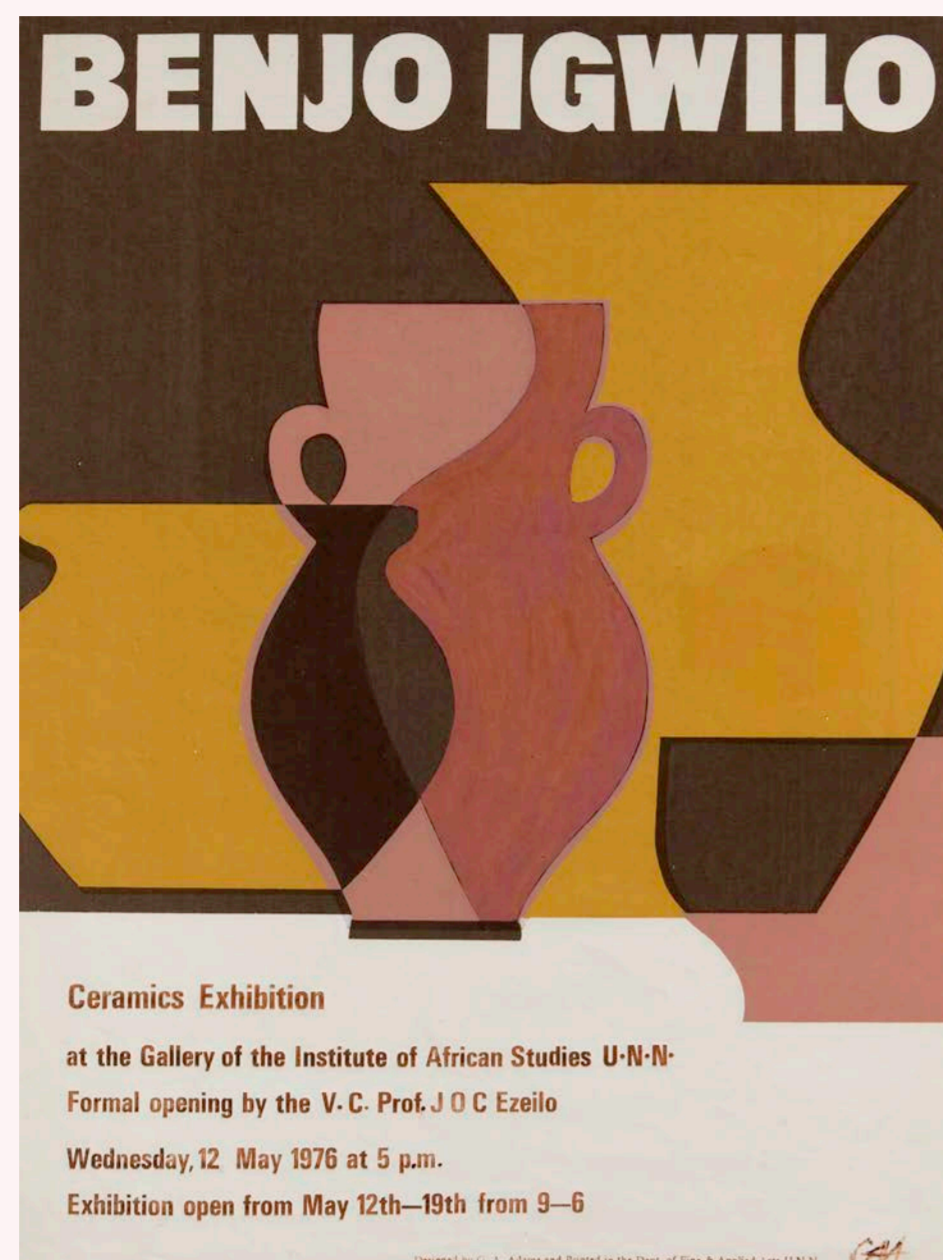
↑
Future Books IV, 'Transformations', 1946, hardcover, 219 x 298mm
Adams's work art directing *Future* magazine (1946–8) was notable for its use of colour photogravure during a time when this was restricted, and its inclusion of Isotype information graphics developed by his compatriots Otto and Marie Neurath. The publication was the initiative of another Viennese émigré Wolfgang Foges, for whom George also worked on children's' books, the production manager being Walter Neurath, who would go on to set up Thames and Hudson.



←
Thames and Hudson logo, 1949
An enduring design depicting two dolphins, one for each of the eponymous rivers in the publishing house's London and New York offices.

→
Thames & Hudson Ancient People and Places series, book jackets, 1955–, 148 x 280mm
The series ran to over 100 titles, each jacket drawing on Adams's cartographic draftsmanship, combining an image of an artefact with a map of the region. Striking use of overprinting two colours to create a third added to the series' distinctive identity.





↑
Exhibition, Poster, 1975
495 x 365mm, screenprint
and letterpress

←
Benjo Igwilo, Poster, 1976
365 x 495mm, screenprint
and letterpress

→
Nigerian Contemporary Art,
Poster, 1976, 495 x 365mm,
screenprint and letterpress
Nigeria is depicted as the
glint in the eye of Africa,
the rich orange background
evoking the red earth of
Nsukka.

Symposium & Exhibition
at University of Nigeria, Nsukka. Formal opening by Professor
J.O.C. Ezilo, Vice Chancellor, at 9.30 a.m. on Monday 22 March, 1976.
The exhibition and symposium etc. will continue to 25 March.
Exhibition will be open from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m.

Nigerian Contemporary Art

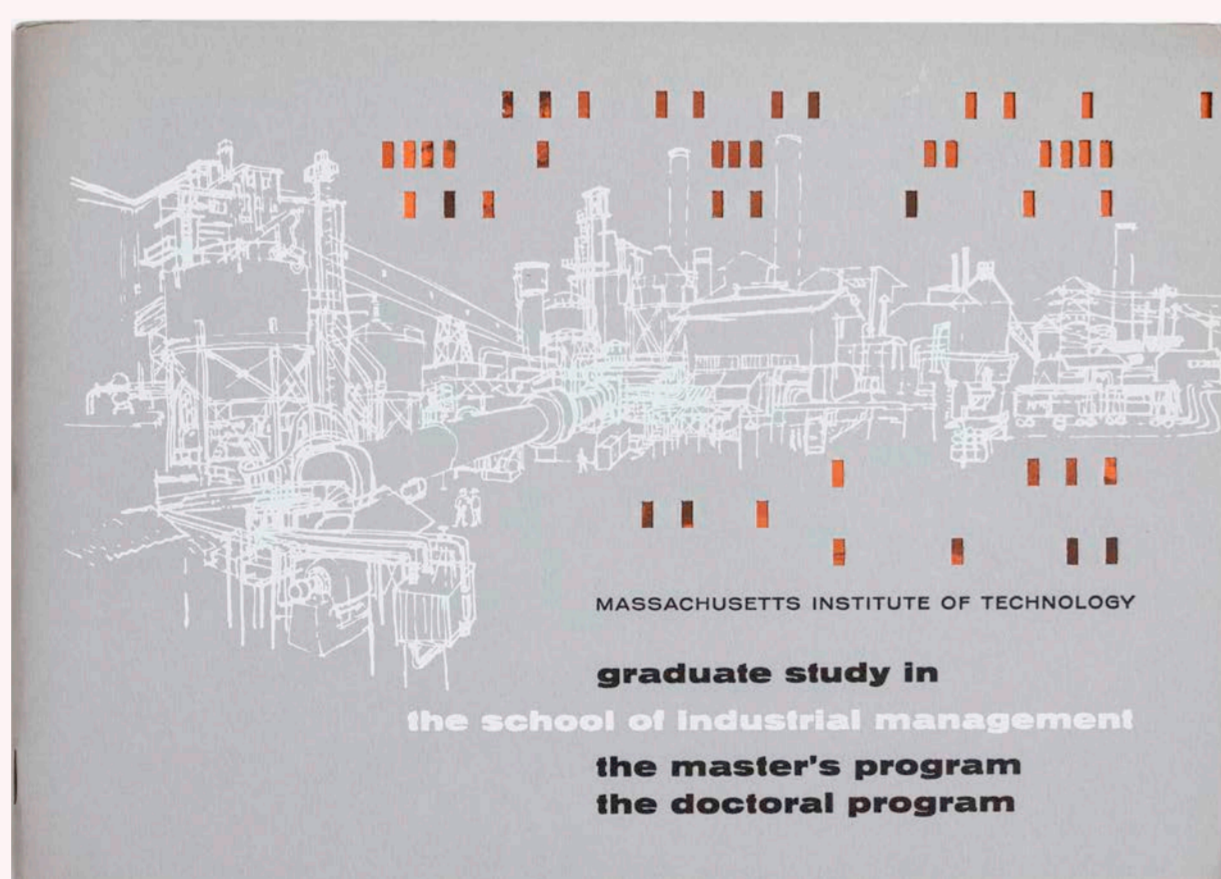
diversity in design

America and Nigeria

Massachusetts

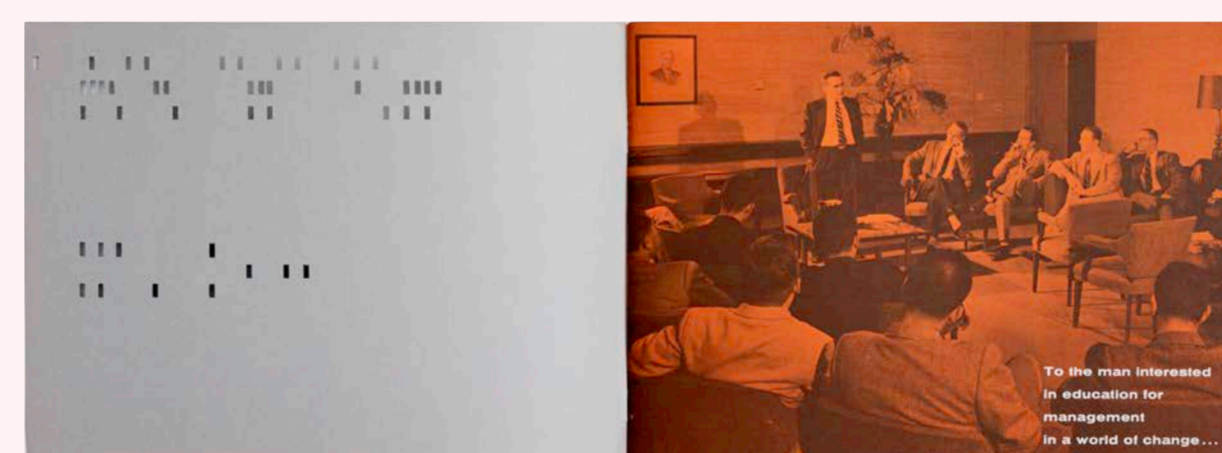
Between 1957 and 1965, alongside his freelance work, George undertook two one-year secondments as a Graphic Designer for Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), where he would encounter many ex-Bauhäuslers, and where he had access to a more generous production budget than his clients in post-war Britain could afford. His work from this period is finessed and intricate, making playful use of overprinting techniques and thoughtfully deploying die cutting and debossing processes with aplomb.

↓
Graduate Study in the School of industrial management, Brochure, 1960, 250 x 177mm
A die-cut pattern in the cover dramatically reveals the orange frontispiece image



Nsukka

During the 1970s George was on the move again, accepting an invitation to start a Department of Art at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, where he served as professor of Graphic Design from 1973 to 1977. The appointment had stemmed from the many Nigerian former students he had taught at the London College of Printing who had now returned home to take up government posts in the fields of printing and artistic affairs. The resources at his disposal were far more limited, yet by focusing on bold visual ideas, his many rough-hewn screenprinted posters overprinted with letterpress exude vitality. Seemingly never far from political unrest, Adams endured a military coup during his time here.



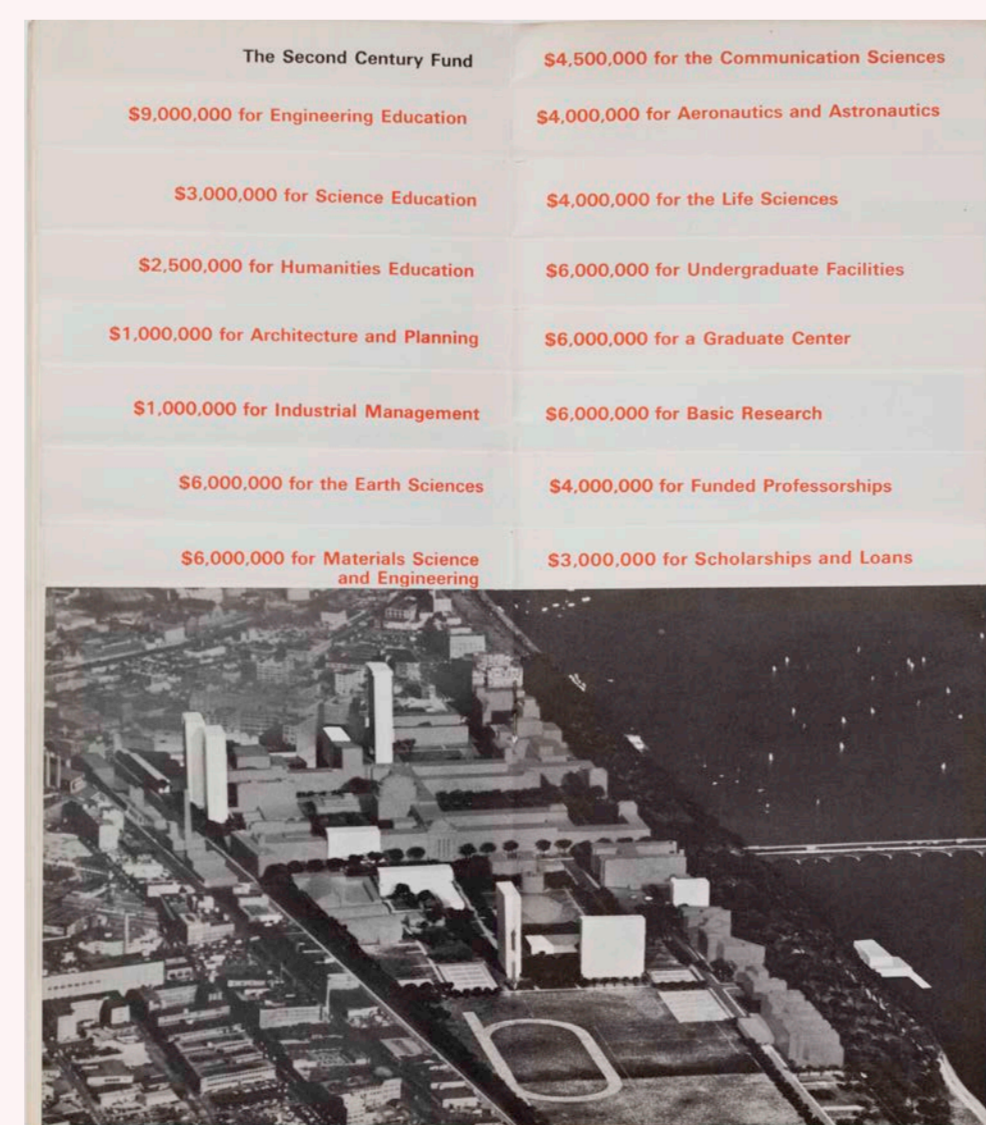
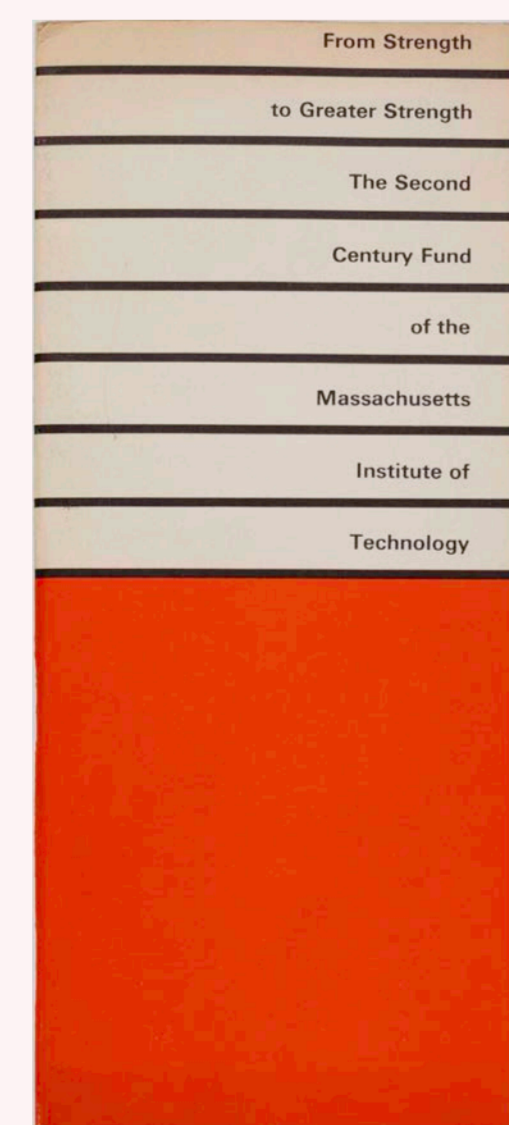
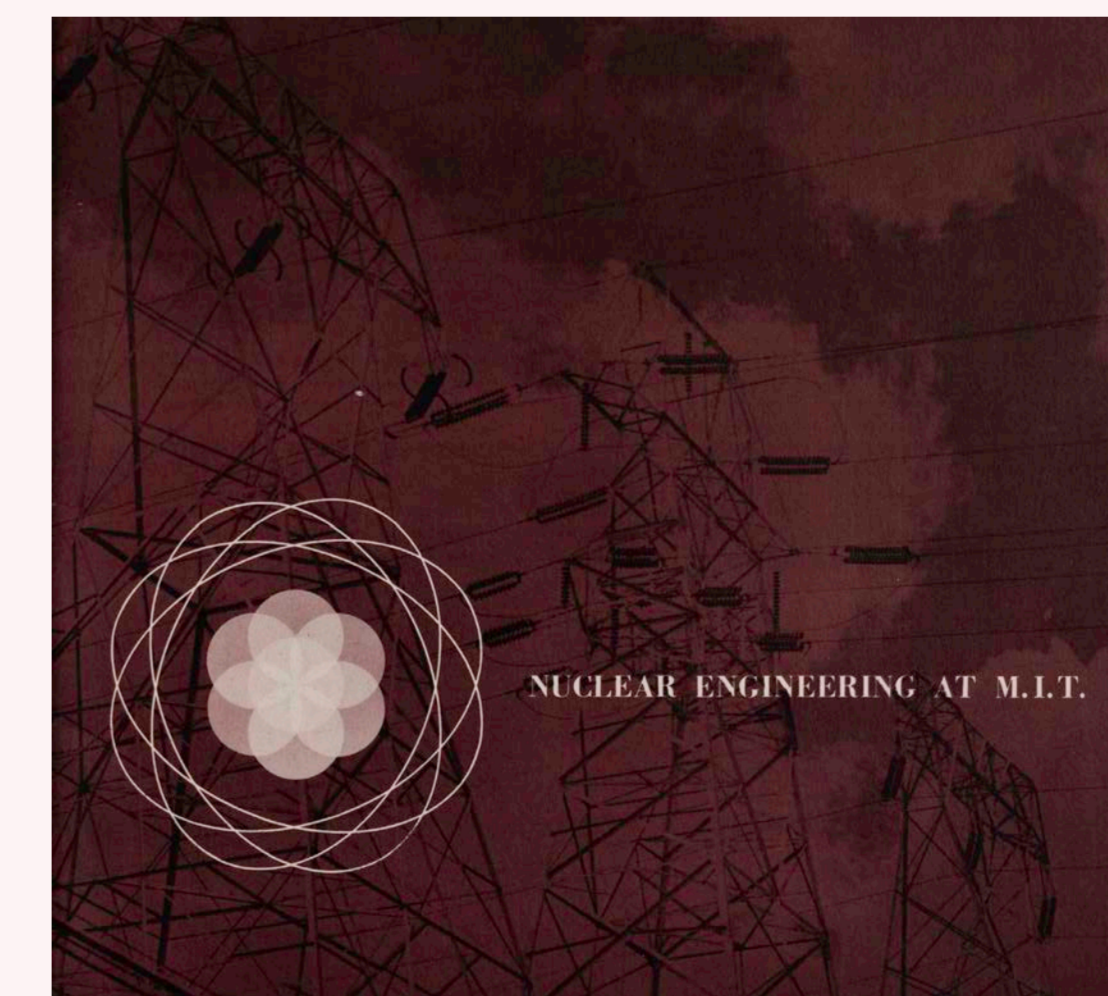
Gospel Oak

He eventually returned to London, and with his wife Sara, whom he had met at the publishing house of George Rainbird, settled in Gospel Oak. After a lifetime of travel and displacement his last years were spent less than a mile from the Isokon where his former teacher Walter Gropius had lived so many years earlier. Industrious to the end, he died in 1983 on his way home from purchasing art materials for his latest design commission, posters for Amnesty International.

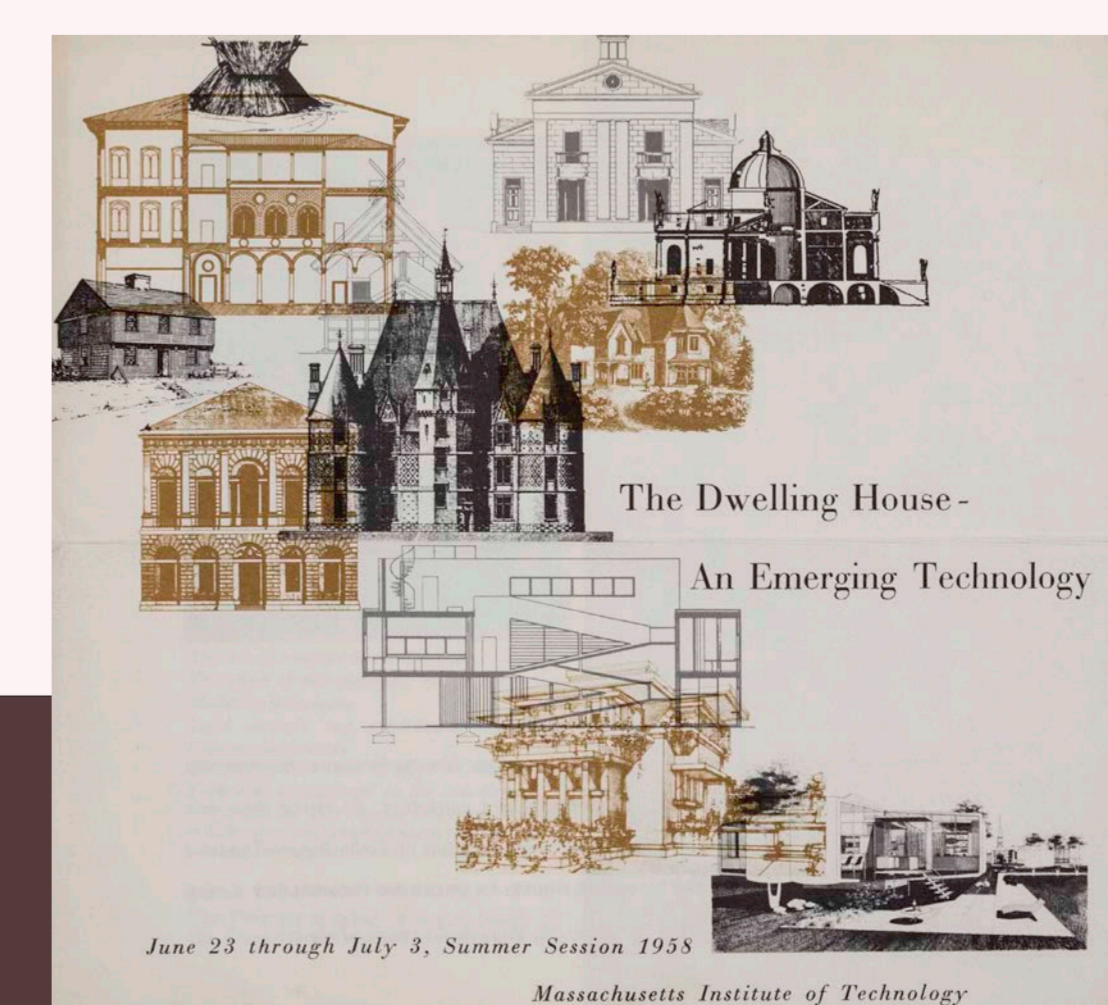
George Adams-Teltscher's output was diverse and prolific and has been featured in numerous exhibitions, most recently in *DYNAMIK! Kubismus / Futurismus / KINETISMUS* held in Vienna in 2011 which also included pieces by Delaunay, Léger, Picasso and many other contemporaries. His extraordinary life story and outstanding achievements deserve to be honoured and celebrated in this centenary year of the Bauhaus foundation. An artist, designer and teacher of international reach, he is also our very own local hero.

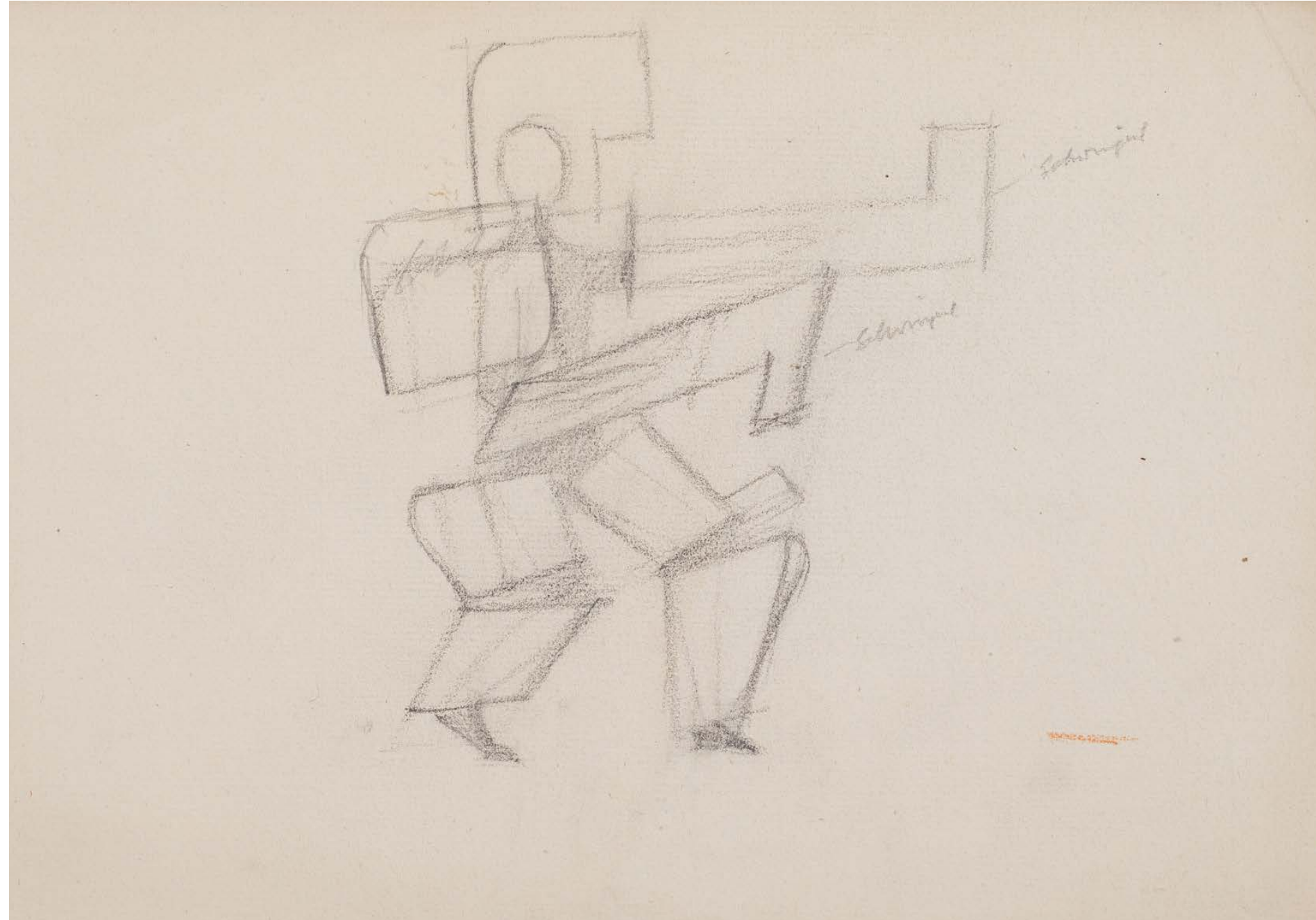
→
Nuclear Engineering at M.I.T.
Brochure, c.1958, 226 x 204mm
The Dwelling House -
An Emerging Technology,
Brochure, 1958, 226 x 204mm

Two brochures from an extensive series promoting the activities of MIT departments. The design is characterised by its consistent format and novel use of overprinting effects



←
The Second Century Fund,
Brochure, c.1960, 229 x 99mm
Pages of this MIT Campus fundraising pamphlet become incrementally smaller towards the centrefold, revealing a visual index of the subject headings.

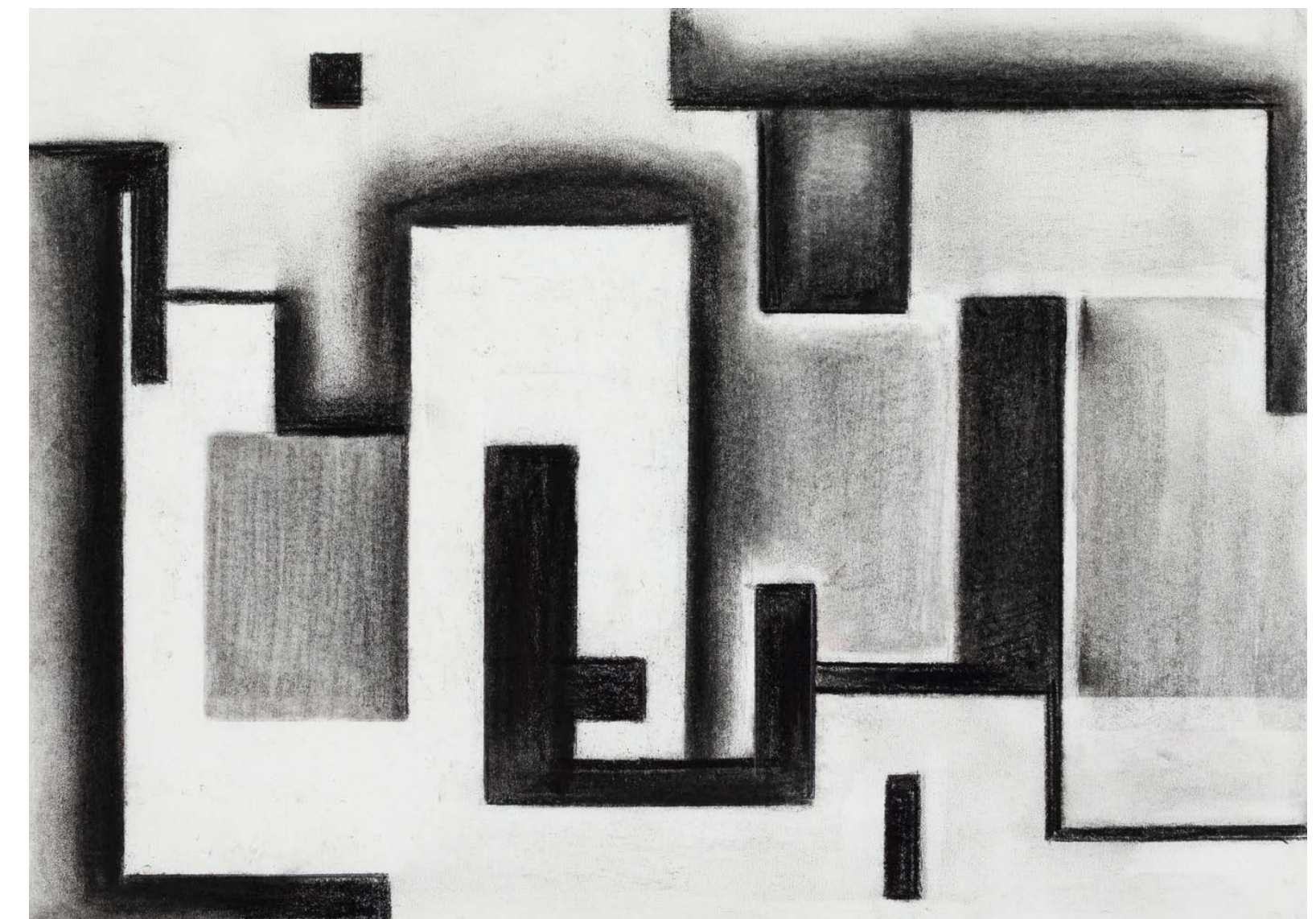
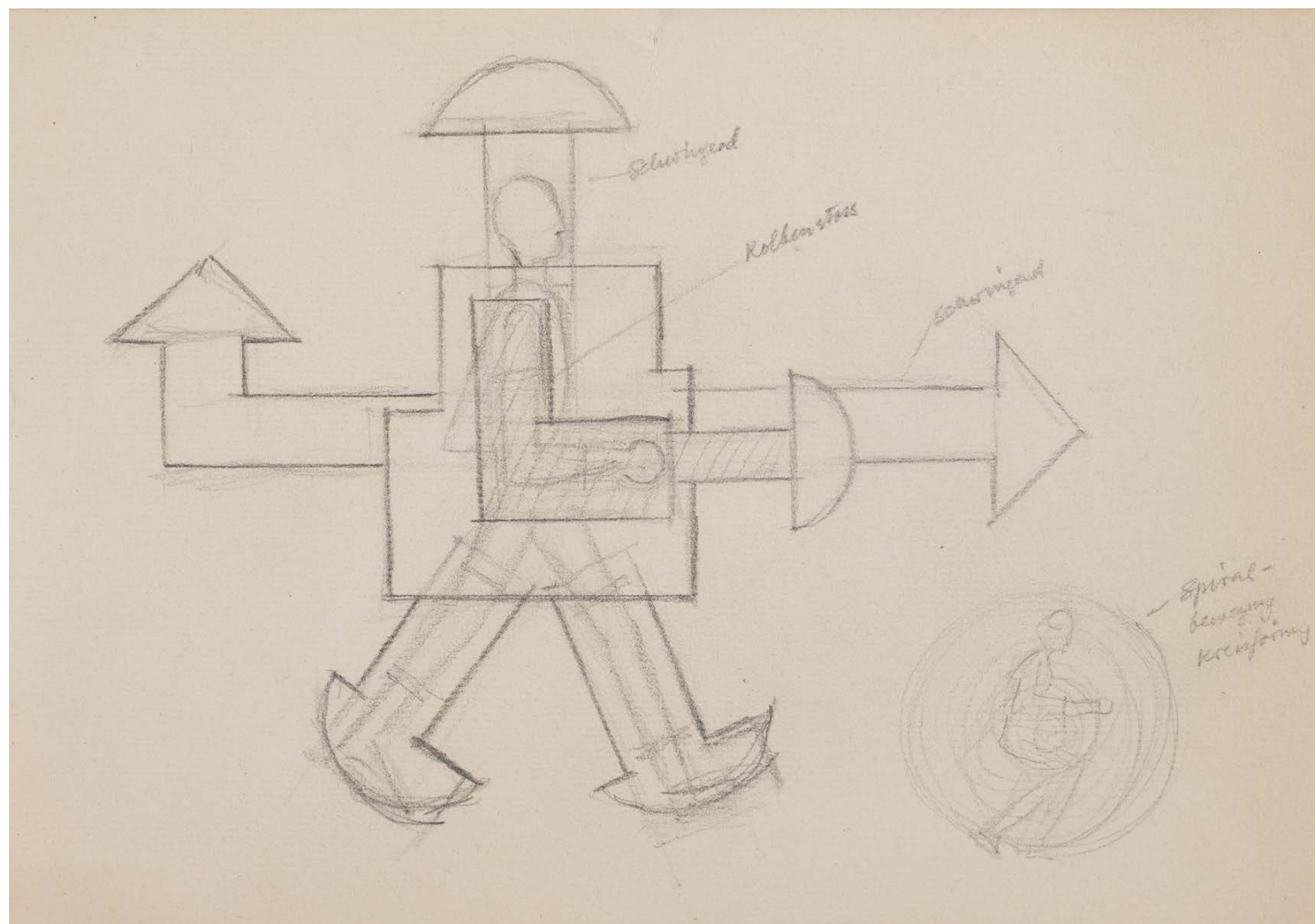
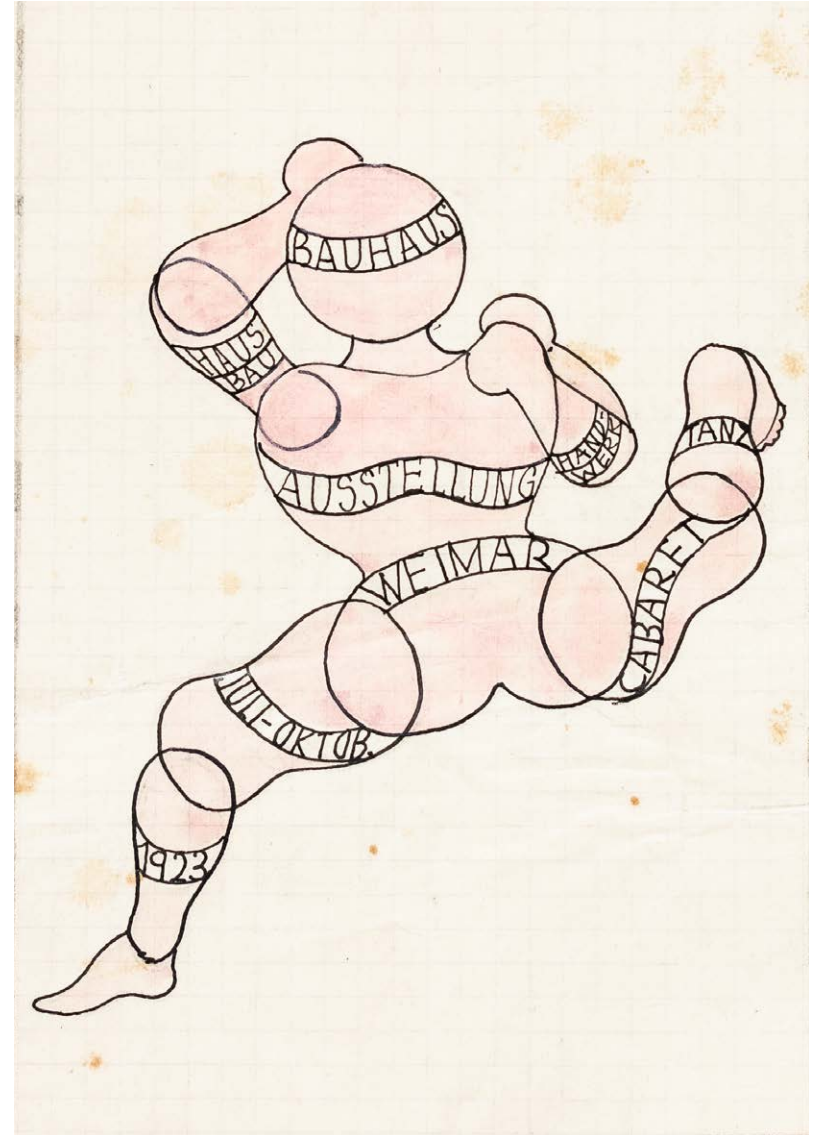




← **Costume studies for *Das mechanische Ballett*, 1923, 253 x 176mm pencil on paper**

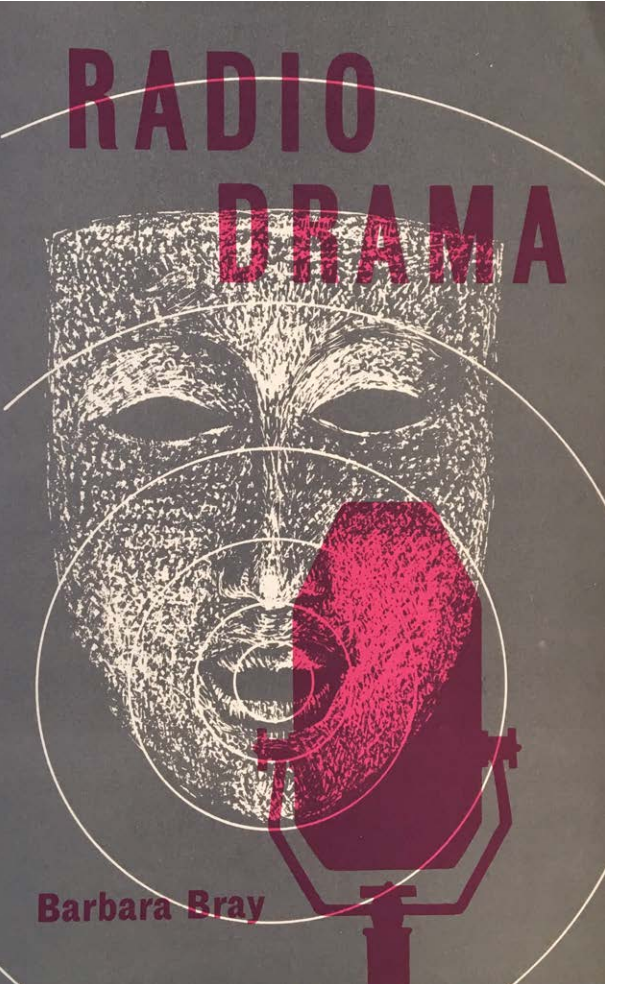
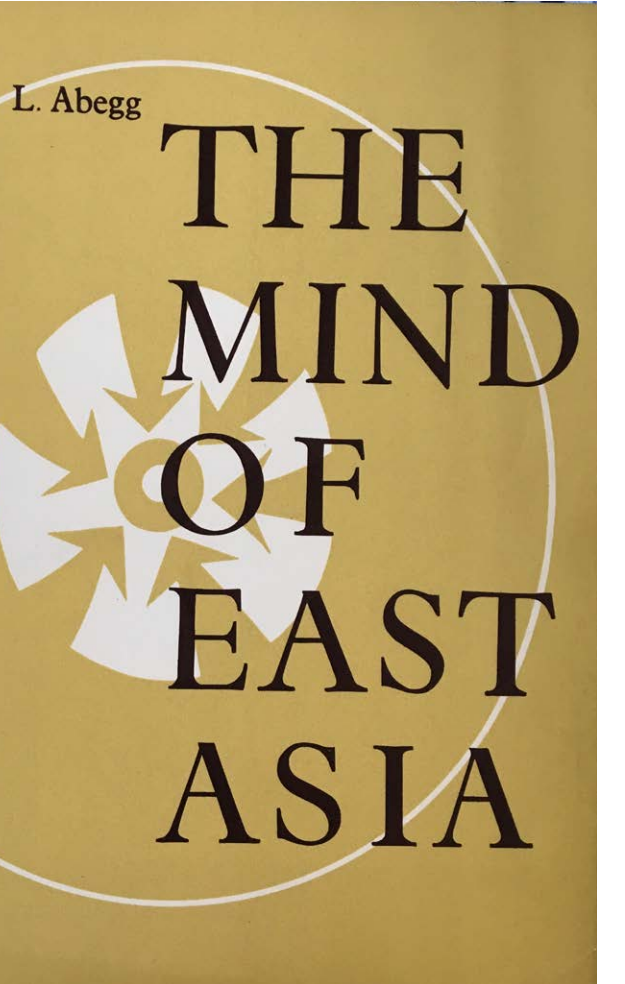
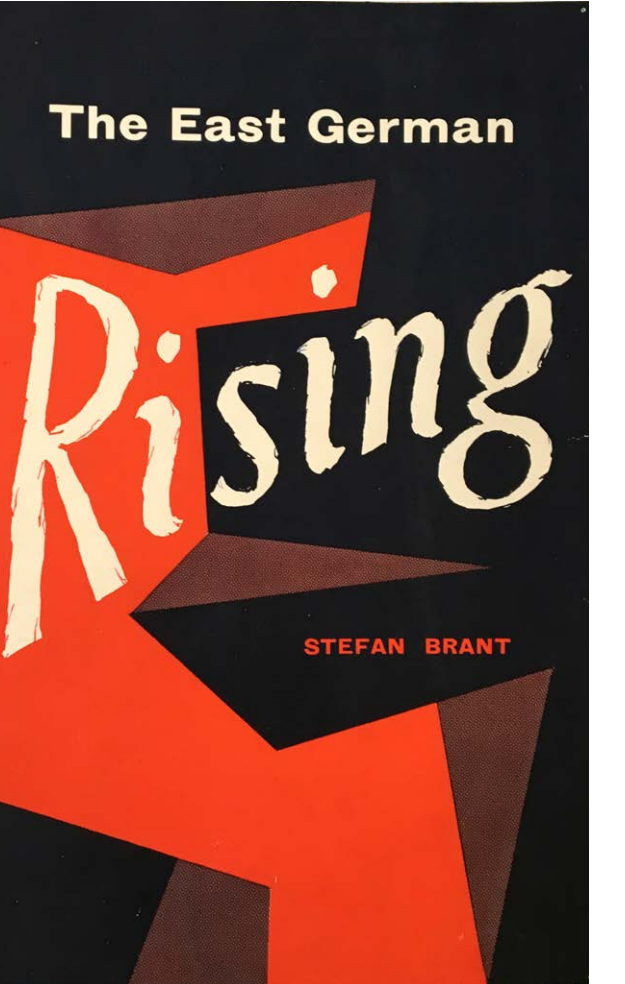
→ **Bauhaus Wache Weimar, postcard design, 1923, 103 x 149mm, ink on paper**

↓ **Title unknown, c.1923, 210 x 150mm, charcoal on paper**



← **Gebt mir 4 Jahre Zeit (Give me 4 years), British propaganda leaflet, 1943, 140 x 107mm**

The slogan was the title of a 1937 exhibition in Berlin about the accomplishments of the Hitler regime in the four years since the seizure of power. Comic still frames of Hitler from the film *Triumph des Willen* are juxtaposed against images of Allied military superiority.



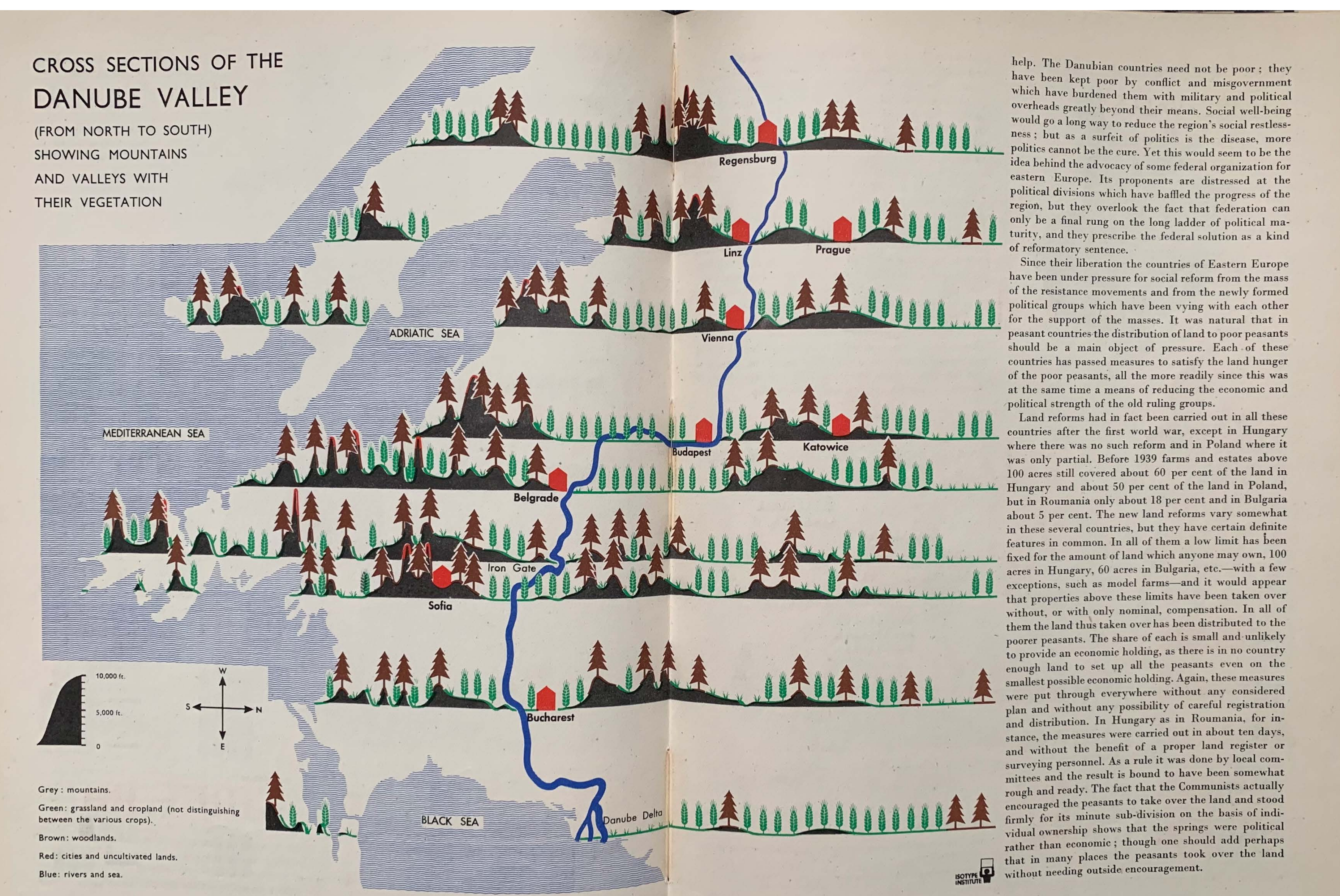
← **Book covers for Thames and Hudson, each approx 140 x 226mm**

The East German Rising, 1955

The Mind of East Asia, 1952

Radio Drama, 1950s, unpublished

↓ **Future Books I, 'Overture', c.1946, art directed by George Adams, featuring information graphics by the Isotype Institute.**



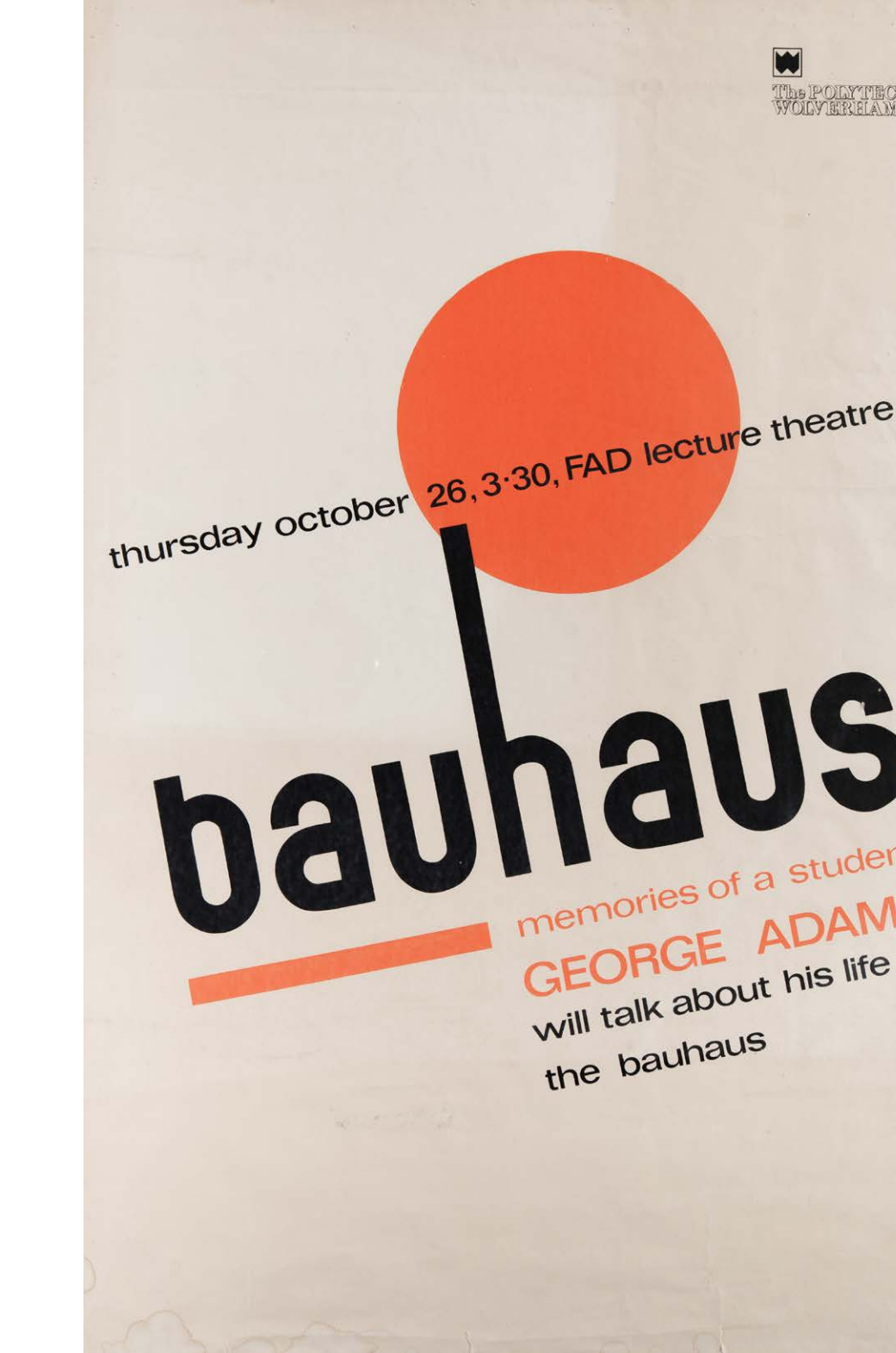
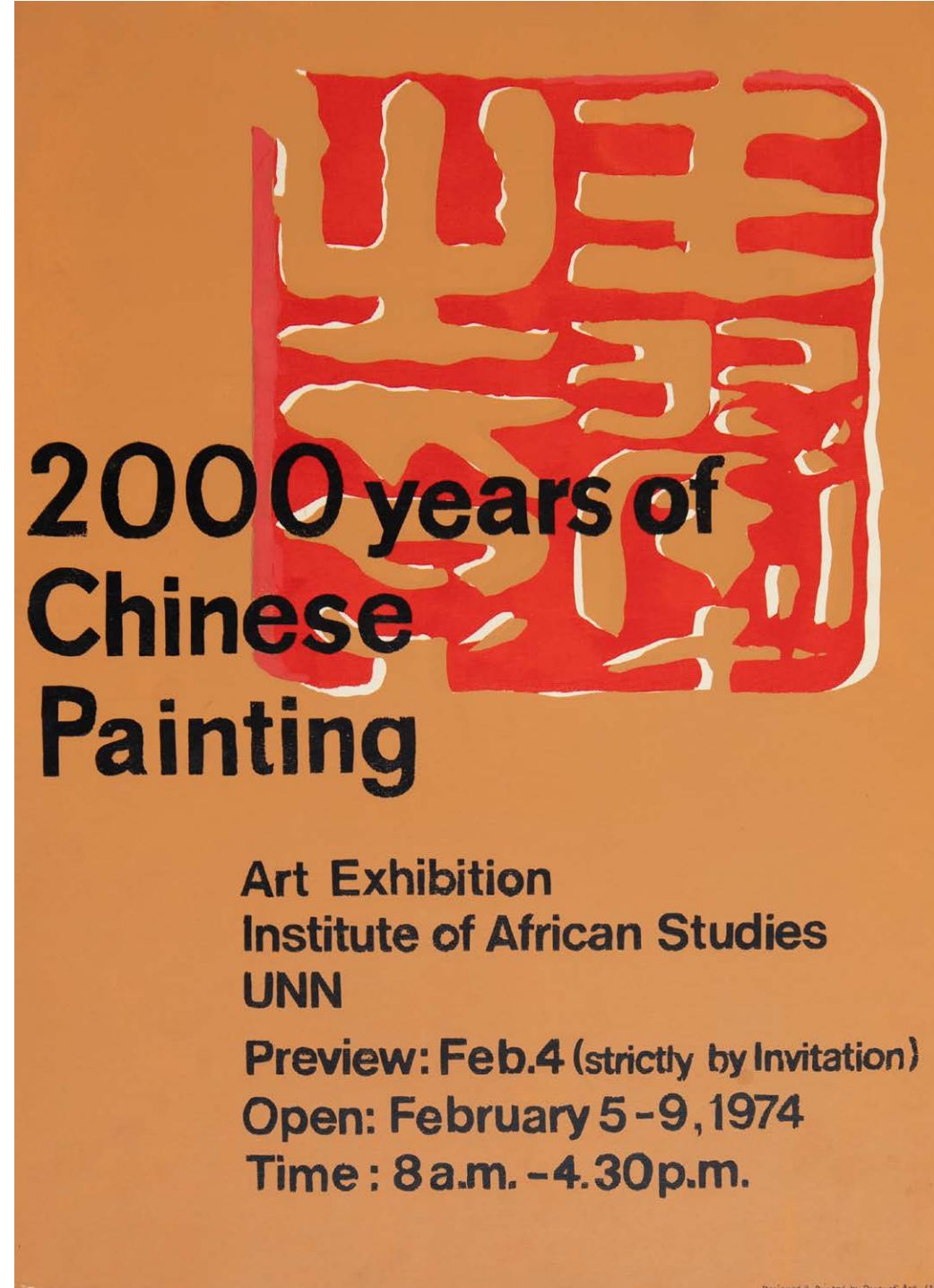
→ **1970s Posters**

2000 years of Chinese painting, Nigeria 1974, 495 x 365mm, screenprint and letterpress

Concert, Nigeria 1975, 495 x 365mm, screenprint and letterpress

Art and technology – the quest of the Bauhaus, Britain 1974, 456 x 620mm, collage

Bauhaus: memories of a student, Britain 1979, 456 x 620mm, collage



→ **Brochures for MIT, 1958, each 226 x 204mm**

Mathematical analysis and simulation in industrial operations

Industrial Dynamics

Metal cutting

Techniques in textile research

