



SECTION ONE

CREATING THE FIELD

AVANT-GARDE DESIGNERS HAD GUTS AND VISION. MOST WERE YOUNG PEOPLE, JUST IN THEIR TWENTIES. THEY WANTED NOTHING LESS THAN TO CHANGE THE WORLD. At the beginning of the twentieth century they unabashedly confronted their society through design. Surrounded by chaos—industrialization, technological upheaval, world war—they sought order and meaning. These artists spoke in manifestos and created posters, books, magazines, and typefaces using strikingly new visual vocabularies. They embraced mass communication; they abandoned easels. They treated the aesthetic conventions of symmetry and ornament like stale leftovers to be scourged at all costs. Instead the avant-garde looked to the machine for inspiration—sleek, functional, efficient, powerful. They tried to discover untainted visual forms that were fitting for the new modern world. Through such experiments they explored asymmetrical layout, activated white space, serial design, geometric typefaces, minimalism, hierarchy, functionalism, and universality. Out of their sweat, movements sprang up—futurism, Dadaism, De Stijl, constructivism, New Typography. Their ideas clashed and converged to form the modern foundation from which the graphic design industry emerged.

HERBERT BAYER Photomontage cover for the first issue of *bauhaus zeitschrift*, 1928. Bayer combines the tools of a graphic designer, basic geometric forms, and a page of type in his layout. Word and image come together to communicate to the reader.