

TOBIAS FRERE-JONES

Type Director, Hoefler Type Foundry, New York City, USA

The history books are notorious for their omissions, but none are more glaring than René Albert Chalet. Only René Chalet could have turned the post-war geist into the dashing, confident style we know. Only he could have propelled it so far forward that we're still catching up. Even today, there are few designers who haven't been guided by Chalet's hand. René himself observed, "The ground under your feet is always moving."

ED BENGUIAT

Type Designer, New York City, USA

Not many people could do what René Chalet did. This guy did it all — typography, illustration, not to mention fashion design. I tried to get ITC to release his types years ago, but nothing ever happened. In any case, I'm glad to see that René Chalet will continue to be an inspiration to type designers for a long time to come.

CHARLES S. ANDERSON

Principal, CSA Design, Minneapolis, MN, USA

I first encountered René Chalet's work in the late '70s while studying at MCAD. I was astounded by the package design for his Enchanté fragrance. Initially, it struck me as sterile and lifeless. Decades later, I realized the true genius of his work as I began to decode the complex layers of meaning built into his deceptively simple designs.

ERIK VAN BLOKLAND

Principal, Lettererror, Den Haag, The Netherlands

In light of the volume (and softness) of his later work, Chalet's type is hardly a small contribution to design history. Rather, it is one of the main supports on which the ground breaking foundation of modern, modern-istic and international styles has been built. Had Chalet decided to pursue his first career, the perspective of typography might have made the shift to the early post modern ironicism a good ten years earlier.

JEAN-FRANÇOIS PORCHEZ

Founder, Porchez Typofonderie, Paris, France

The typographical work of René Chalet establishes a true link, probably the only one, between Bauhaus experimentation and the pure French style. Perhaps that is why his work has never been recognized for its real value. However, we are now provided with a superb revival of the Chalet font family from the American type foundry House Industries.

MATTHEW CARTER

Type Designer, Cambridge, USA

I used to take with a grain of salt Chalet's claim, which one heard in Paris in the '60s, that he himself had designed the typefaces used in his advertisements. But in a conversation with Rémy Caravelle about the ties between French haute couture and typography (he had been telling me about Cassandre's work for Yves Saint-Laurent) he said that Chalet had good typographic credentials and was not "un bluffeur" — something that House Industries has now established beyond a doubt.

Some of Chalet's letterforms, particularly the lowercase 't', remind me poignantly of the types of Albert Hollenstein, another Swiss who worked in Paris. Hollenstein too had a connection to fashion through his lettering for 'Elle' (whose art director Peter Knapp was yet another transplanted Swiss). It is splendid to see Chalet's types again, after so long an interval, and to be reminded of the crucial contribution of the expatriate Swiss designers to French — and now international — typography.

ERIK SPIEKERMANN

Founder, MetaDesign, Berlin, Germany

It's about time somebody revived interest in Chalet's work; work that has undoubtedly influenced my career as a graphic designer and typographer. But is it any wonder that Chalet is the amazing innovator to whom history attests? After all, the Chalets of Graubünden developed a distinct architectural style in the late 1800s that became synonymous with an entire culture. It should come as no surprise that René Chalet inherit his family's legacy. However, proper recognition has not been given to his incredible contributions, until now. It's high time the world knew about René Albert Chalet and the full scope of his achievements.

MICHAEL BIERUT

Principal, Pentagram, New York City, USA

Perhaps my earliest exposure to design was my first glimpse of the astonishing typographic mural in the foyer atrium of the Belgium Pavilion at the 1964 New York World's Fair. I was surprised years later when I discovered that the designer was the same man who had created my mom's favorite handbag, her adorable yet rigorous "Petit Parangon." Even today, the irrepressible optimism of that period is overwhelmingly evocative to me. Reintroducing the typefaces of René Albert Chalet is exactly what we need to get this century started on the right track.

JONATHAN HOEFLER

Creative Director, Hoefler Type Foundry, New York City, USA

It's always the mavericks who do the best work. Perhaps it's because Chalet worked outside the type manufacturing establishment that he had such a strong influence over those inside; in the late '50s, the pervasive aesthetic of the big American type houses was nothing more than an imported and repackaged Chalet style. I don't think any of the great American designers of this era would have achieved any sort of lasting recognition had it not been for René Chalet.

ELLEN LUPTON

Curator, Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum, New York City, USA

It is hard to understand why René Albert Chalet has been completely overlooked by the design history establishment. We ask ourselves, how could this terrible oversight have occurred? It is a humiliation to all self-annointed experts on typographic culture to have missed this glorious Swiss boat.