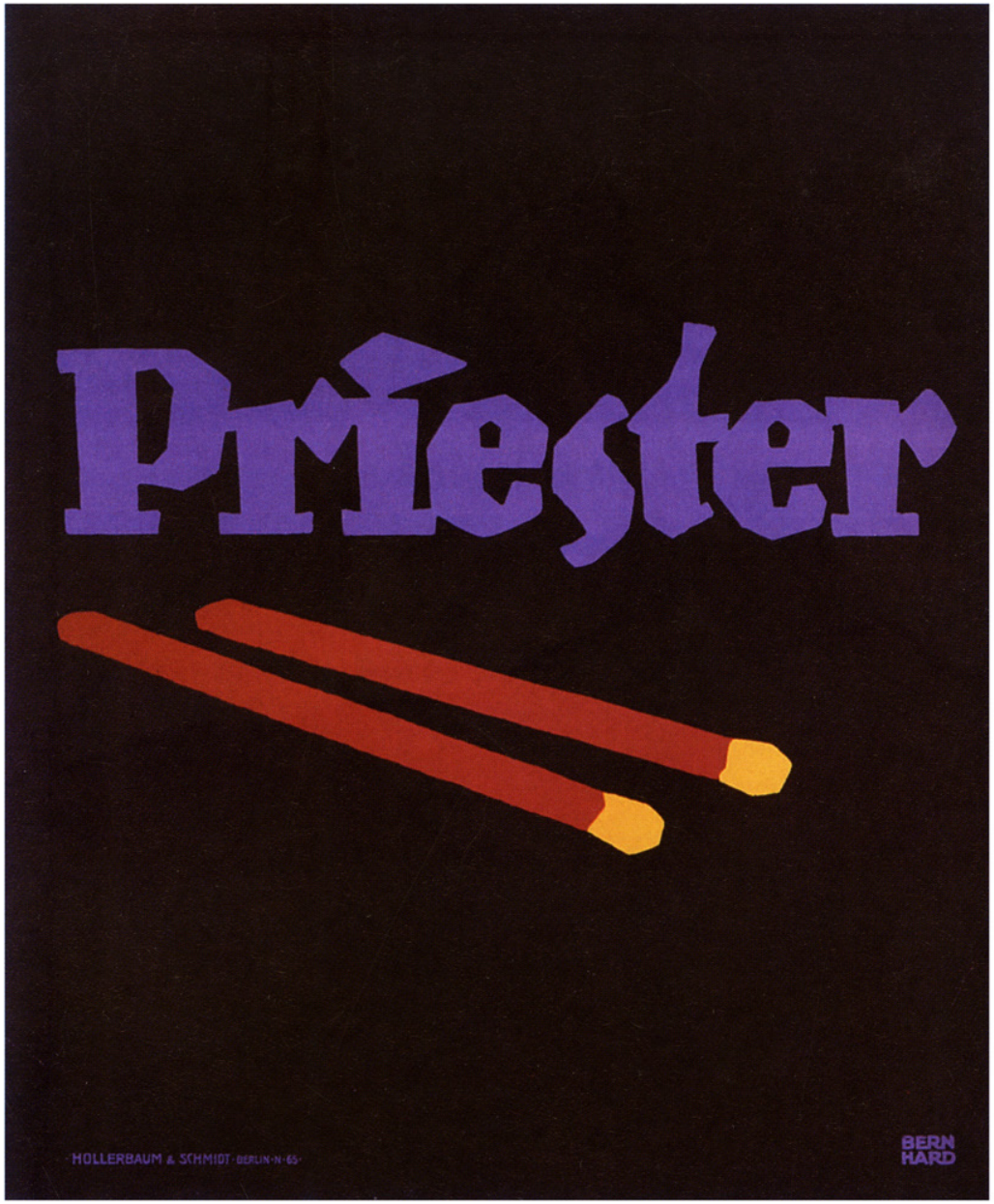
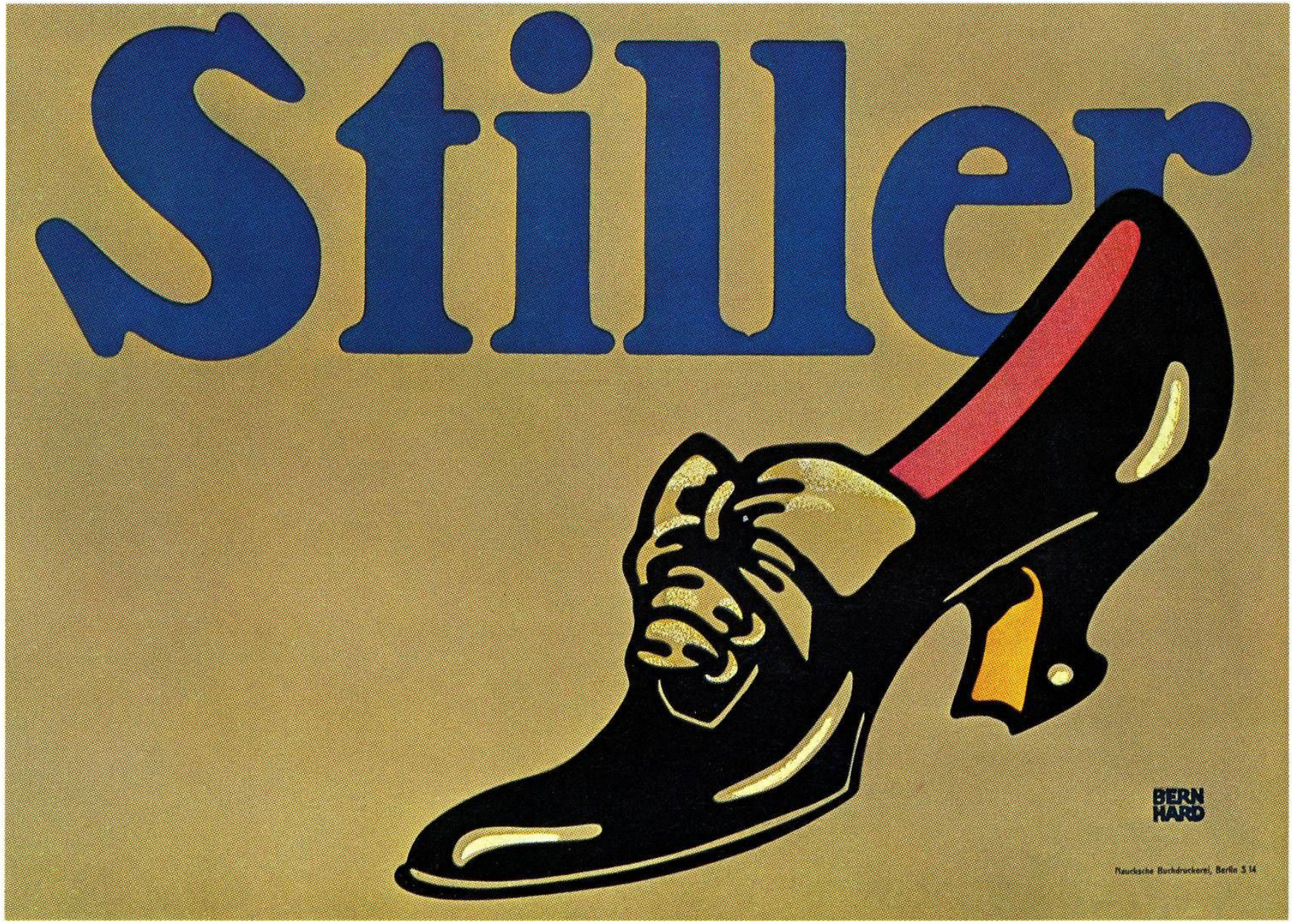
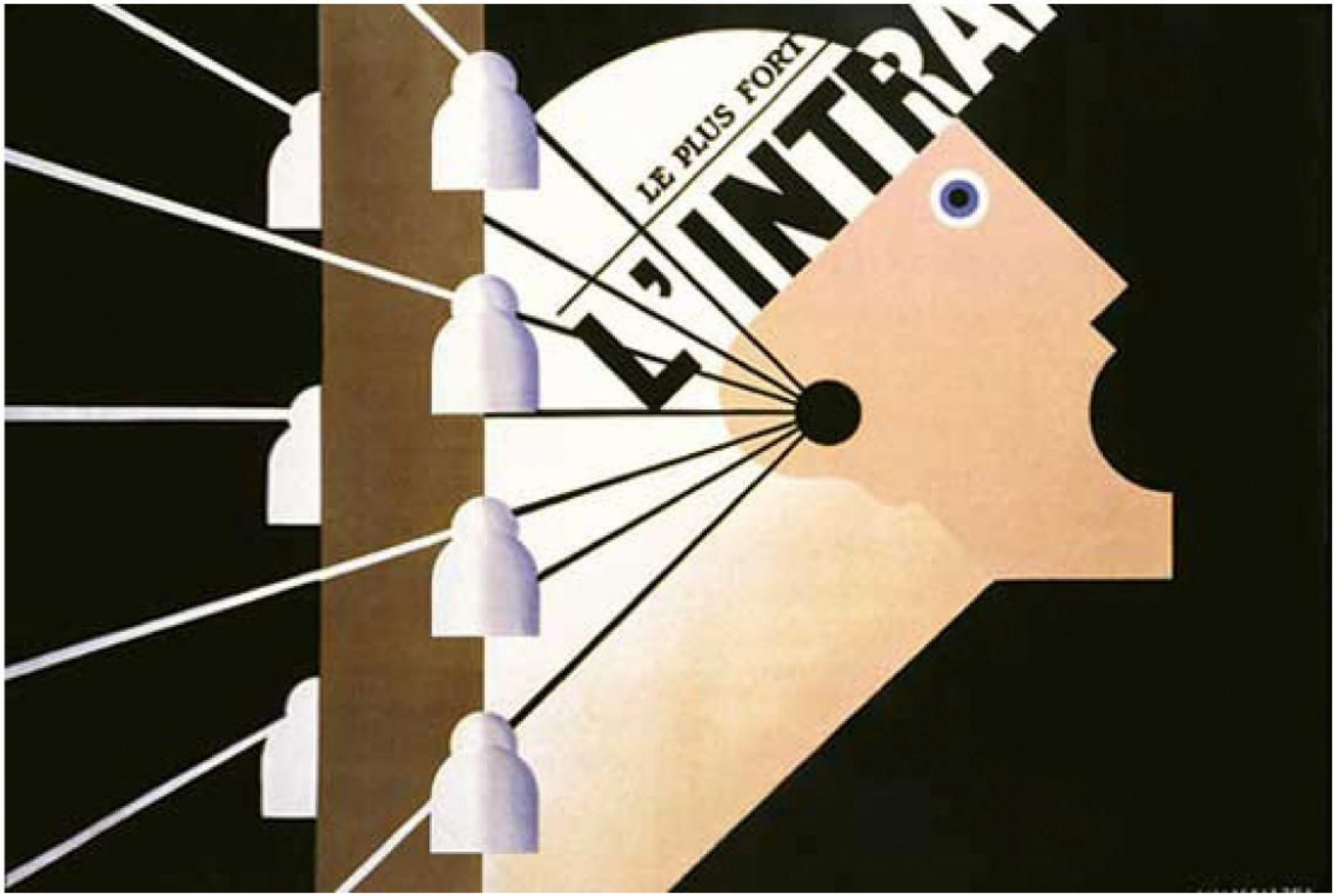


Lucian Bernhard, poster for Preister matches, 1905.
Powerful message with minimal information.



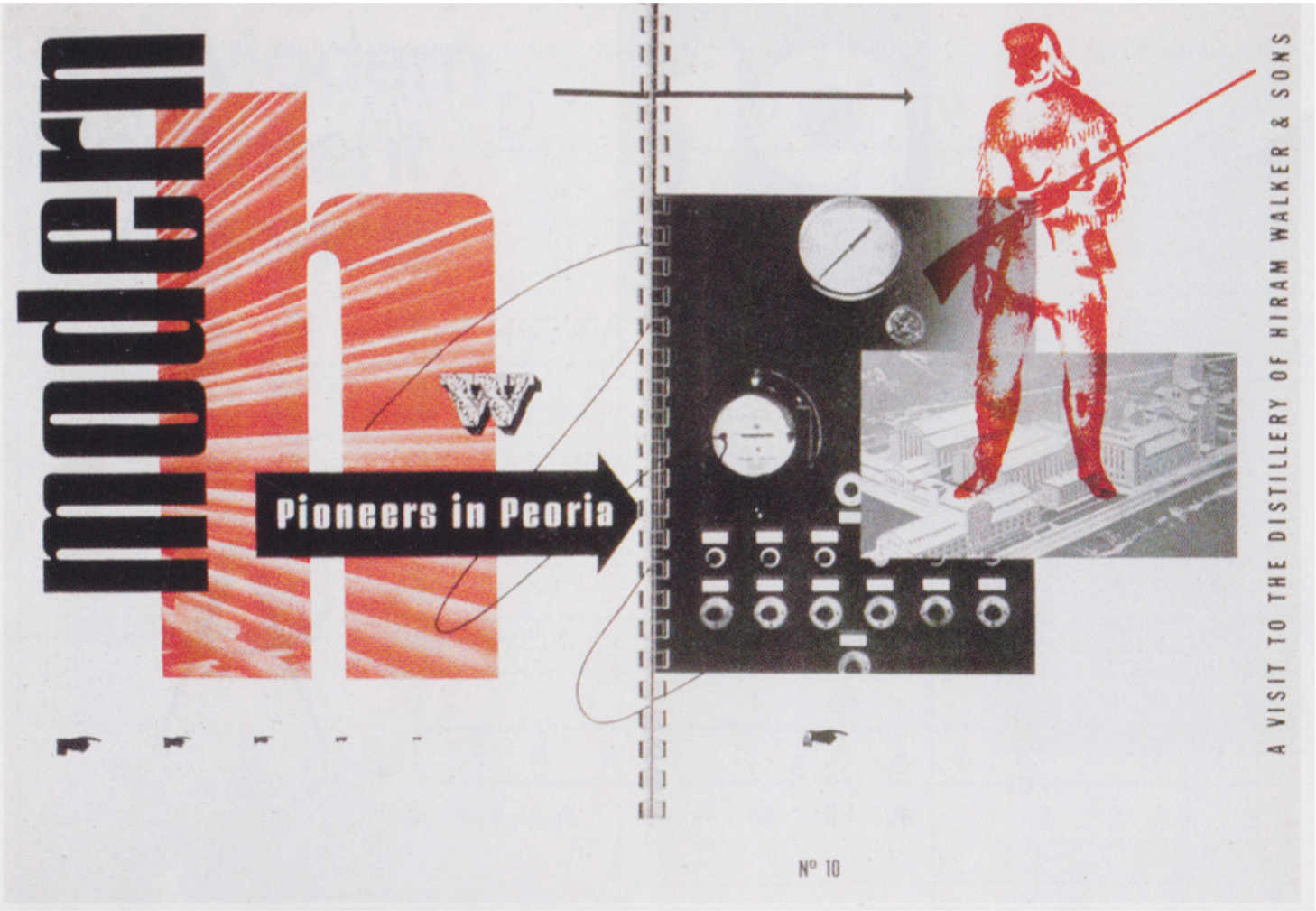
Lucian Bernhard, poster for Stiller shoes, 1912.
Subtle color with the intense red of the shoe.



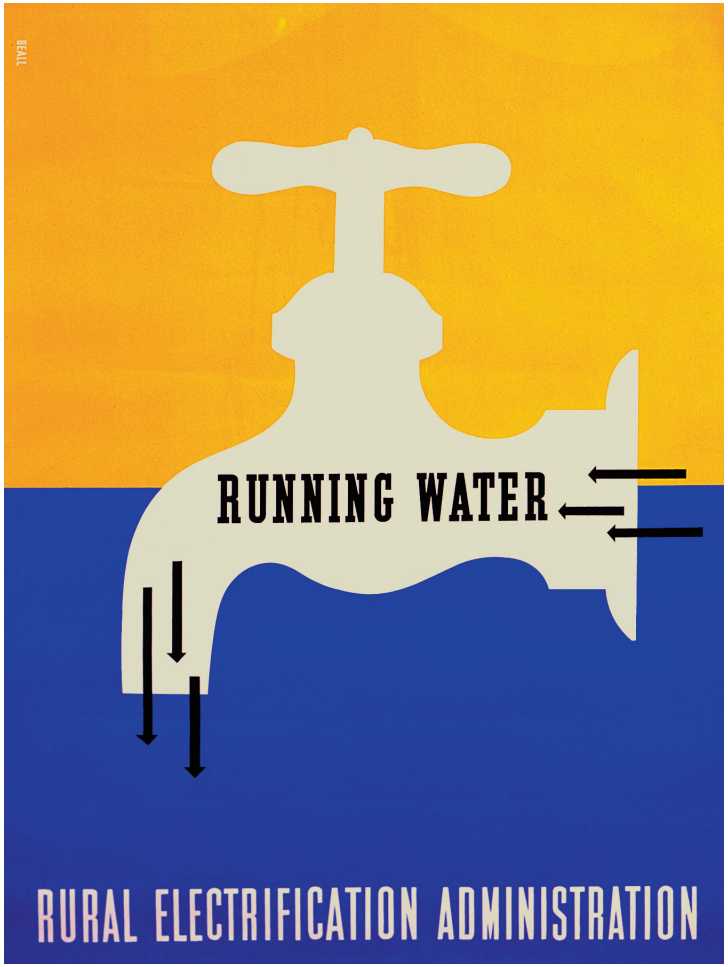
A.M. Cassandre, poster for the Paris newspaper, 1925.
A pictographic image of MArianne, the symbolic voice of France, urgently shouts news received over telegraph wires.

A.M. Cassandre, poster for the North Star train, 1927.
A.M. Cassandre, poster for the ocean liner L'Atlantique, 1931.

Schulz-Neudamm, cinema poster for Metropolis, 1926.
Art Deco conveyed optimism for machines and human progress, but here it turns darkly where robots replace people.



Lester Beall, title pages from a brochure, 1935.
Victorian wood type contrasts with sans-serif type and photography contrasts with drawing.



Lester Beall, poster, 1937.
The benefits of electricity were presented through signs understandable by illiterate audiences.

PARIS 1935

by BEATRICE MATHIEU

In Paris, life is a gamble. Anything might happen. Nobody knows what. In the face of wars and rumors of wars, Paris dressmakers, the great gamblers, have tossed on a world going socialistic the most extravagant and remarkable fashions in years. What is going to happen? Is this just a last wild splurge before uniformity sets in? A madness born of fearfulness? A giddiness due to the coming inflation? Or is it the beginning of a new era of dressiness, and are we going to adopt these thrilling fashions to our present hectic lives?

You see women crossing the Champs-Elysées, wearing ankle-length dresses whose full hems swing with the wind, and with picture hats whose brims flop down to their shoulders with every passing breeze. The "agents de police" stare, gaping, after them; these clothes are as strange to the streets of Paris as a parade of elephants.

You see "A bas la guerre" sprawled in big hand-written letters across the sides of buildings; and you hear, on the streets of Montparnasse any evening, young men in military caps and carrying flags, haranguing the crowds to stand together in the new war against national enemies.

The crowd at the Crémaillère—the women wearing sables or blue fox, and blouses of lace—rush to the windows every noon to watch the President's Guard march by in gold braid uniforms and plumed helmets.

In Boucheron's windows, at the angle where the rue de la Paix meets the Place Vendôme, there are little chain bracelets with hanging bangles made of miniature carved wood Scoties wearing tiny collars of diamonds; and across the square, under the particoes of the Ritz, three men in bowler hats and cutaway coats are standing talking and saying that there will be no war, that no one can afford it.

In Paris, the people themselves have never been so French. The years when Americans crowded the Café de la Paix have disappeared. The night clubs where Argentines tangoed and flashed diamond bracelets, elbow-deep, are as if they had never been. In the student cafés along the Boul Mich you hear practically no Polish, no more Hungarian. The "English Spoken" and "Se Habla Espagnol" signs are disappearing from shop windows.

For the Paris couture, this is the miracle, the manna in the desert, the rainbow on the sea. For the first time in years, the couture is really French.

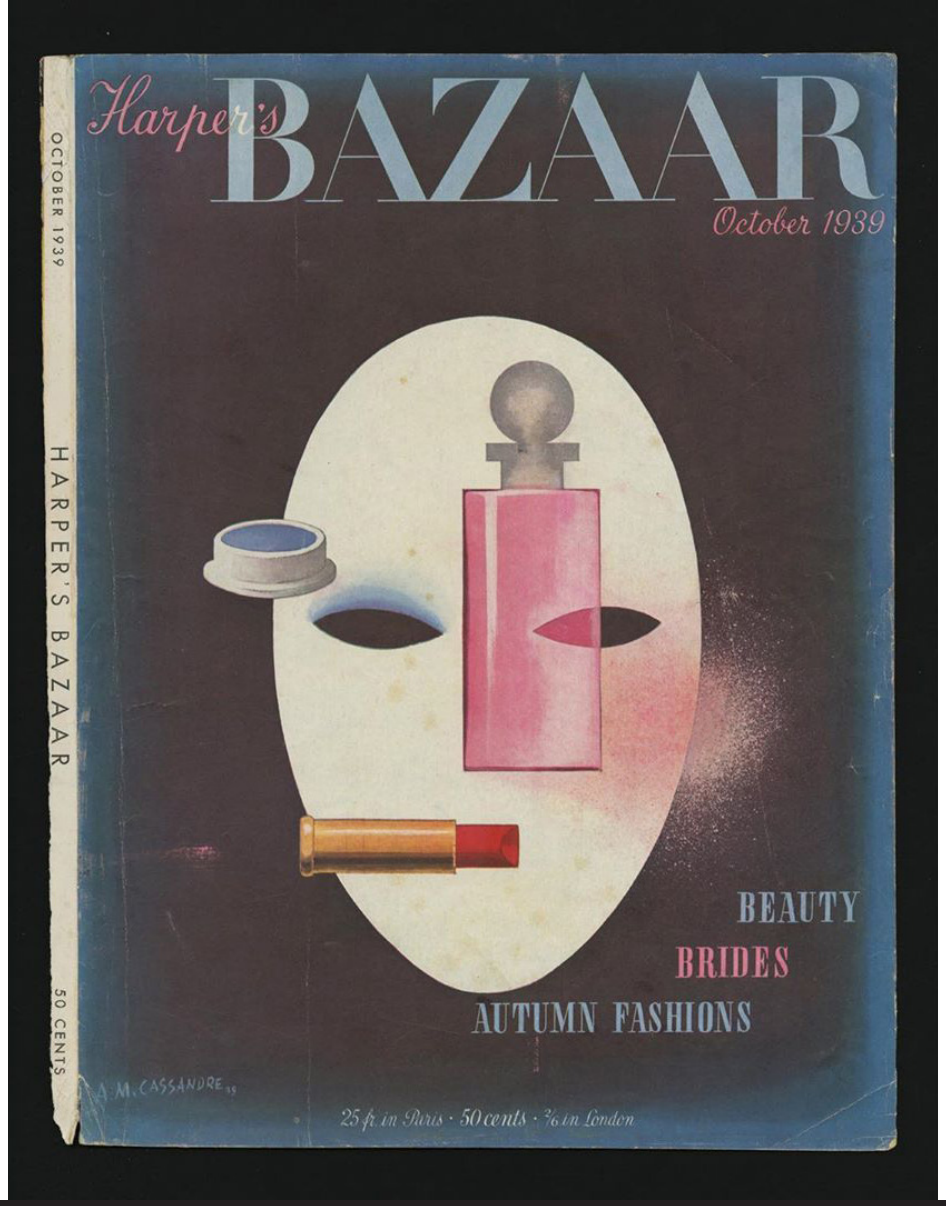
There is nothing international about the new clothes. The Paris 1935 Winter Collections could not have been done anywhere but in Paris, by any but a French people.

Again the paradox: thoroughly French, made by and for a French people, French clothes have never been of such quality. Never have they exerted such influence on the world of largo. It is almost as if it were the beginning of a new epoch. We shall soon be looking back to these few weeks as the launching of the period of the picturesque, the lavish, the extravagant, the beautiful in the world's history of costume.

In reality, none of this is new; it only seems so because it has been so long forgotten. We (and the French, as well) have forgotten that the really creative thing is born of the individual, not of machines. 1935 teaches us, already, that fashions are not made in factories, nor even in designing rooms by designers; they are born in the common travail of many individuals—the weaver, who makes thread and color; the designer, who cuts and drapes; the fitter, who struggles to make each woman the lovely picture she longs to be; and even the little apprentice, who sews the seams and gives to each dress a certain touch that is all her own. In this scheme of things each individual contributes to the growth, not only of the thing in itself, but of all creative fashion. Each little apprentice works on her seams with her hands, but her mind creates the entire dress; every stitch sews, within her, another seed of growth toward the great couturier.

Someone has said of one of the famous Paris couturières that she is like a priest who must commit no sin, but who must know all vices and understand all penitence. This woman leads no worldly life, she is as the simplest worker in her own sewing rooms. Yet, in the fitting salon, with her clients, she must understand all phases of life. She must know equally well the women who must triumph on the stage of next week's first-night theatre (Continued on page 176)

Alexey Brodovitch (art director) and Man Ray (photographer), pages from Harper's Bazaar, 1934.
The figure's oblique thrust inspired a dynamic typographic page.



A.M. Cassandre, cover for Harper's Bazaar, 1939.
A perfume-bottle nose, lipstick mouth, and powder-puff cheek.