

Biography of Otl Aicher



Otl Aicher was a German graphic designer and typographer. Born 1922 and died in 1991. He is best known for having designed pictograms for the 1972 Summer Olympics in Munich that proved influential on the use of stick figures for public signage, as well as designing the typeface Rotis. Aicher also co-founded the Ulm School of Design.

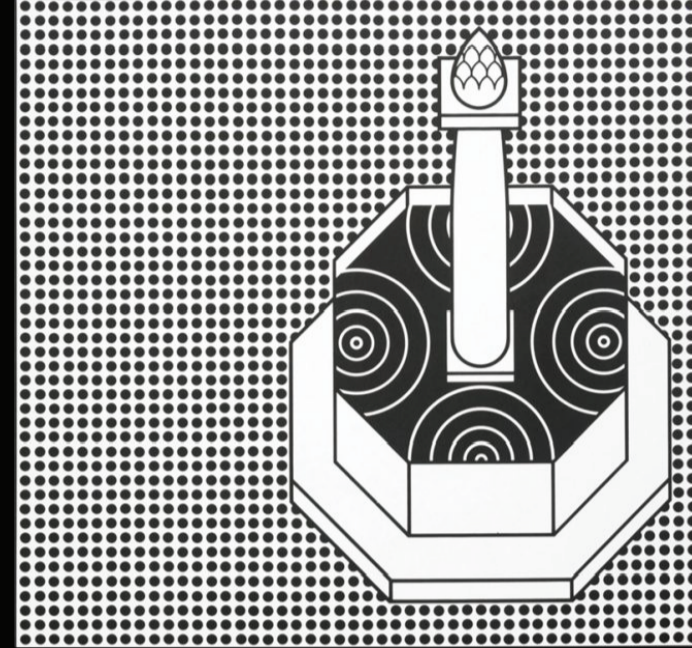
Otl Aicher also had an interest in corporate branding. He was requested to design the logo for the German airline, Lufthansa, which came out in 1969. Besides that, he was approached by the organizers of the 1972 Summer Olympics, offering him the Olympic Games' lead designer's position. Reviewing the '64 Games design, he based his work partly on previously employed iconography

and created a set of pictograms. These pictograms were developed with the intention of presenting a visual interpretation of the sport the stadium featured. This careful creation of pictograms helped athletes and visitors find their way around the Olympic village and stadium. He made use of Univers typeface for the Olympic designs.

In fact, the technique that Aicher's used to represent via design was adopted by the United States Department of Transportation as they developed the DOT pictograms in 1974. Soon those signs were used publicly around the globe, for instance for toilets and telephones. Moreover, he is credited for creating the Munich Olympics logo and the first official Olympic Mascot.

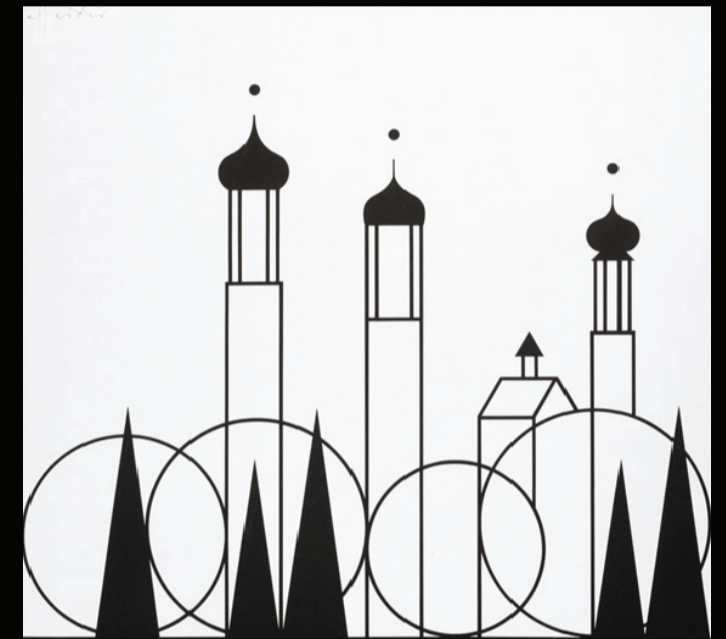
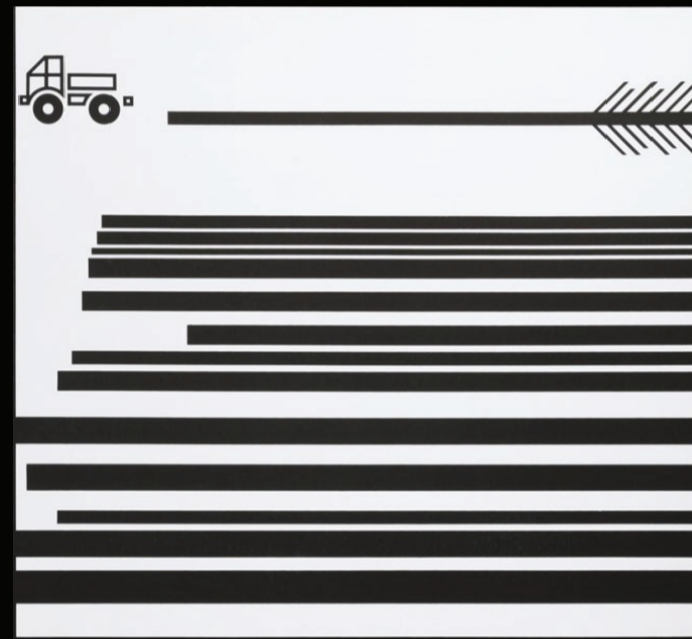
Isny Am Allgäu

Otl Aicher's Isny



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The monochrome graphic system that the late Otl Aicher created for the German town of Isny im Allgäu features in an exhibition at this year's London Design Festival.

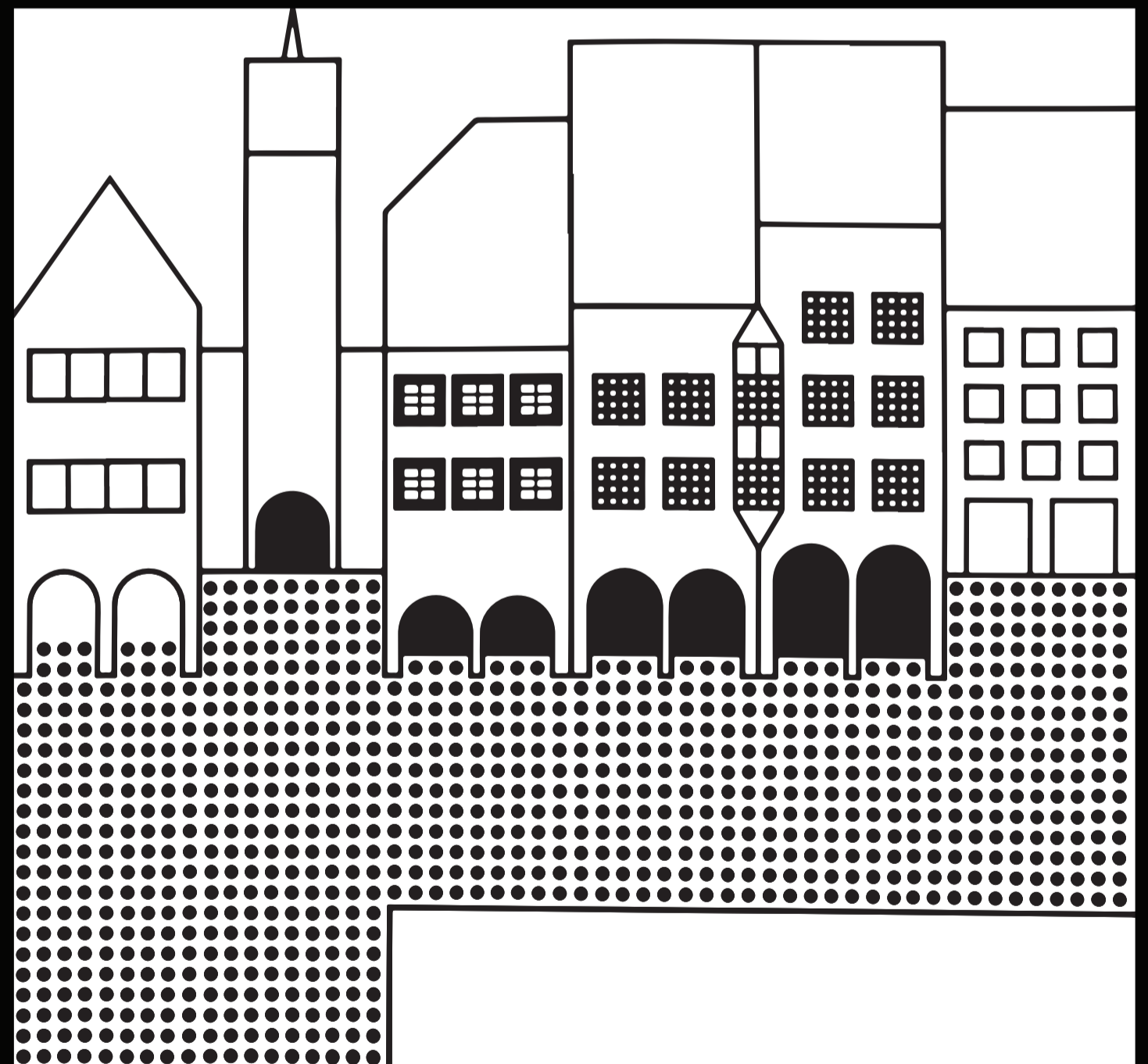
Otl Aicher's Isny showcases the graphic identity that the modernist graphic designer and typographer – best known for creating the Munich Olympics identity in 1972 – developed for the town around the same time. Hosted by London design agency dn&co, the exhibition reveals a graphic system made up of 128 pictograms, produced over the course of a decade.

Isny, Germany

Otl Aicher Used abstract iconography to illustrate aspects of town life – ranging from forests and animals, to churches and pretzels – Aicher created a design language where icons could be combined and rearranged to depict a range of narratives.

According to Eley, by rejecting the "blue skies and blonde waitresses", Aicher made a lot of enemies in the town.

"I think it was a subversive technique," Eley said. "Doing something that was black and white, that was a signal shift from the colour culmination of the place before, was so effective that people found it quite difficult to swallow to begin with."



The reduction of design

Unlike traditional tourist identities of the era, Aicher's designs represented the town's rich alpine landscape in austere black and white – a radical decision that polarised opinions in the town.

"We've got an alpine town that is known for its outdoor scenery and fantastical outdoor pursuits, yet Aicher represented it entirely in black and white," exhibition curator Patrick Eley told Dezeen.