VISUAL STUDIES RESEARCH INSTITUTE

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SPRING 2026 EVENTS

USC-LACMA HISTORY OF PHOTOGRAPHY SEMINAR

Typophoto: New Typography and the Reinvention of Photography

BOOK TALK with author JESSICA D. BRIER

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 3
5:30-7pm PT
Max Kade Institute
2714 S. Hoover St., Los Angeles

Co-sponsored by the Max Kade Institute for Austrian-German-Swiss Studies, the Department of History and the Department of Art History

A century ago, renowned Bauhaus artist and theorist László Moholy-Nagy coined the term Typophoto, the synthesis of photography and typography, which played a foundational role in the Modernist graphic design movements known as the New Typographers. These designers embraced Typophoto, ultimately reinventing photography as a tool of modern consumerism.

Typophoto embodied designers' belief in photography as an efficient form of visual communication, and as a tool for manipulating perception, transforming photography into graphic material through the halftone process. Jessica Brier's book *Typophoto: New Typography and the Reinvention of Photography* uniquely situates 1920s advertising discourse alongside avant-garde art and photography theory. She explores Typophoto as an analytical framework for considering how photography—as process, image, material, and metaphor—was effectively reconceived through the professionalization of graphic design in Europe and the United States. This was particularly true in Germany, where the capitalist ethos driving the country's economic recovery bolstered the belief that graphics could create ideal reader-consumers. Through New Typography's experiments with photography and printing, photography was invaluable as a visual language of modern life.

Jessica Brier is a curator, educator, and historian of art and design with a focus on modernism and the intersecting histories of photography, print, and design. She currently serves as curator of photography at the Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center, Vassar College, where her exhibitions have included *Making a Life in Photography: Rollie McKenna* (2024) and *On the Grid: Ways of Seeing in Print* (2022). Brier previously held positions at the Robert Mapplethorpe Foundation and Headlands Center for the Arts, and served as curatorial assistant in Photography at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. Brier holds a PhD in art history and graduate certificate in visual studies from the University of Southern California and an MA in curatorial practice from the California College of the Arts.

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