Modernist Magazines and the Social Ideal
Tim Satterthwaite

"If you think you’ve seen all there is to see on the interwar period, Tim Satterthwaite proves you wrong: his original perspective on the world of illustrated magazines draws our attention to a wealth of social and cultural phenomena. The book’s sophisticated readings of magazine photographs reveal a treasure trove of inspiring, unexplored materials." Patrick Rössler, University of Erfurt, Germany

"The study of illustrated magazines makes for an intimidating prospect, given the sheer quantity and variety of even one title’s output. Satterthwaite makes this challenge a point of departure in his fascinating study of the iconic interwar titles UHU and VU. Across innumerable periodical pages he sees patterns that reveal the form and purpose of the classic magazine, and its formative role in the experience of European modernity.”
Andrés Mario Zervigón, Rutgers University, USA

The new photo-illustrated magazines of the 1920s traded in images of an ideal modernity, promising motorised leisure, scientific progress, and social and sexual emancipation. Modernist Magazines and the Social Ideal is a pioneering history of these periodicals, focusing on two of the leading European titles: the German monthly UHU, and the French news weekly VU, taken as representative of the broad class of popular titles launched in the 1920s.

The book is the first major study of UHU, and the first scholarly work on VU in English. Modernist Magazines explores, in particular, the striking use of regularity and repetition in photographs of modernity, reading these repetitious images as symbolic of modernist ideals of social order in the aftermath of the First World War. Introducing a novel methodology, pattern theory, the book argues for a critical return to the Gestalt tradition in visual studies.

Alongside the UHU and VU case studies, Modernist Magazines offers an essential primer to interwar magazine culture in Europe. Accounts of rival titles are woven into the book’s thematic chapters, which trace the evolution of the two magazines’ photography and graphic design in the tumultuous years up to 1933.

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