FRANK PICK

AND HIS INFLUENCE ON DESIGN IN ENGLAND
UND SEIN EINFLUSS AUF DIE FORMGESTALTUNG IN ENGLAND
ET SON INFLUENCE SUR LE PROBLÈME DE LA FORME EN ANGLETERRE

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Frank Pick was born in 1873 and died in 1941 in his 62nd year. At the age of 38 he was appointed Traffic Development Officer to a group of London transport companies that was later absorbed into the London Passenger Transport Board. During the whole of the period from 1909 to 1940, when he resigned his position with the Board, the good appearance of the physical machinery used or produced by his organisation was one of his major interests. At the outbreak of war it would probably have been true to say that there was not in the whole of London’s transport business a single building, vehicle or piece of equipment that did not somewhere bear the mark of his thought and work. Curiously enough, the result was not so much an expression of Pick’s personality as the creation of a new personality altogether, the personality of a great corporate undertaking. It has often been said that a corporate body has no soul. This particular corporate body was one of the great exceptions.

It is with lettering and poster art that Pick’s name is most generally associated, and it was in this field that his work began. Within a few years of his appointment he had introduced poster artists like E. McKnight Kauffer and Austin Cooper to the British public and stimulated Edward Johnston to produce the first modern san-serif letters, the precursors of Kabel, Futura, Erbar, Gill and others. From the graphic arts his interests gradually spread to the design of buildings, vehicles and every kind of equipment. Nothing was too big for him, and nothing