

## Polish Cold War Neon



In 1929, the first neon sign in Poland went up in Warsaw. Popular from the start, the earliest neon signs were made to order free in design, shape, and color, and significantly influencing other forms of advertising like poster design and typography. When the Communist regime gained power after World War II, it took a controlled interest in the medium of neon, going so far as to create Reklama, a state-run company for advertising services that held a monopoly on exterior advertising throughout Poland. Designed and built by prominent architects, graphic designers, and artists and overseen by a chief graphic designer, Polish neon signage was renowned for its outstanding technical and artistic qualities. During its peak, Reklama maintained over 1,000 neon signs, whose playfulness and folly stood out in the otherwise dark and oppressed Poland, ornamenting otherwise drab cities and towns. Today, most of the neon signs are gone, too expensive and fragile to maintain; belonging to no one, all that remains of them are their ghostly weathered shadows. Polish Neon: Cold War Typographic and Design tells the fascinating story of neon in Poland by preserving and celebrating the remnants of this rich and influential history. Comprising archival and contemporary photographs of these mesmerizing signs, as well as original designs and interviews with the designers, this book reveals an untold story of Poland and how a communist bureaucracy helped shape the future of graphic design and typography.

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