

Typography

The eye of a designer...

What is *Typography*?

Understanding and appreciating design requires treating type as an art form -- with attention to shape, texture, space, and alignment. All communicate on a visual, as well as a textual, level. Type is art -- an art essential in communication.

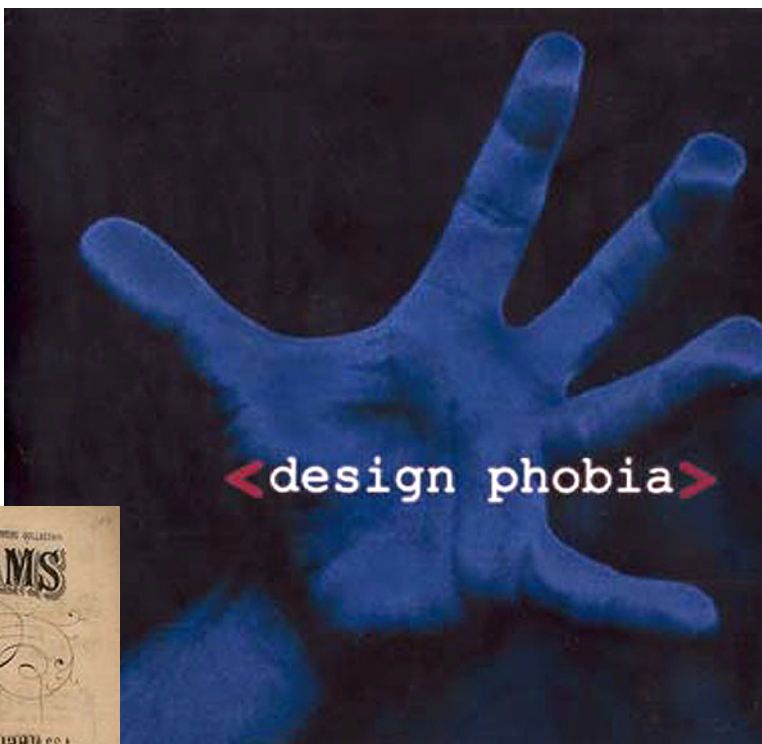
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Communication

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Using type in a creative fashion:

That is what typography is all about. Your goal is to create something with excitement and to hold interest. Similar to creating an image, there are many styles and forms that typographers use. Whether it is something very simple, or a creation that is much more complex, the importance is to get your message noticed. You will see below a piece of sheet music created over 100 years ago. The designer chose to embellish the words with flourishes and give the message a feel for what it represented. Designers and musicians have always worked well together, they both have a similar thought process. Creativity spreads with creativity, a great song can inspire great design and vice versa.



Typography is defined as the art and technique of selecting and arranging type styles. Kind of a dry definition, huh? I would think of typography as truly an art form of words, the same as photography is an art form of images. There are countless styles of type, better known as typefaces, to choose from. This vast array can be quite overwhelming, but as a designer you will begin to recognize the good from the bad, and where and when to use each.

A graphic designer's responsibility is to create a piece that will be noticed, and just as important it must relay a message. This means of communication can be portrayed in many different forms, be it an advertisement, billboard, brochure, business card, cd cover, web site, etc. What is essential is that the designer, who is the communicator, use all of their means and abilities to create the best piece possible.

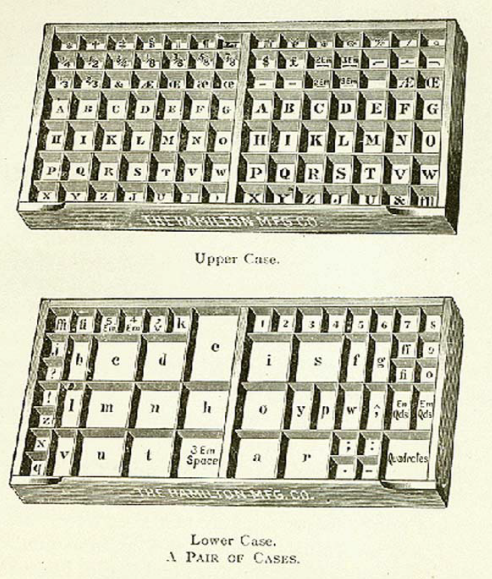
You have already spent a considerable amount of time learning and experimenting on creating more powerful images. Now it is time to learn how to use the written word in a way that will emphasize that impact and not diminish it. It used to be quite difficult and very time consuming to create a piece that went out to the general public. It was left in the hands of a professional, for they were the ones who had the expertise to handle the job properly.

With the onset of personal computers in the mid 1980s everyone now had a means of doing desktop publishing. Most people believed that they had everything necessary to make a printed piece of any kind. It was true, they could purchase

the very same programs and applications that professional designers used, and the very same can be said today in regards to web design. However, only a select few are truly design professionals. The ones who devote the time and effort involved in learning this profession, are the ones who will succeed the most. Just because you go out and purchase a nice new set of tools, it does not make you a mechanic or carpenter. These professions require an extraordinary amount of learning, just like designing. One thing that truly sets someone ahead of all the rest, even the seasoned professionals, is a person with a natural gift, you have that!

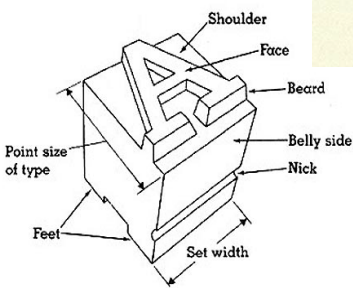


Type in this country has been used since the arrival of the Pilgrims. It was important to get the news of the day, or week, out to the people so they would be better informed. Our forefathers passionately believed it was essential that all of the new settlers remained informed. It is the basis of our constitution. So, within the different communities there was a printer, and his sole job was to inform the public. He did this through his printing press and prepared his shop in the most organized way. In the photo to the left you can see what a typical print shop of the colonial days looked like, except for the blue plastic bins...lol. You can see the printer had large cabinets of draws and an angled surface to work on. Each of the drawers held the individual characters of type. One draw contained the capital letters, while the draw below it contained the subordinate letters. This became known as “upper case” and “lower case”,



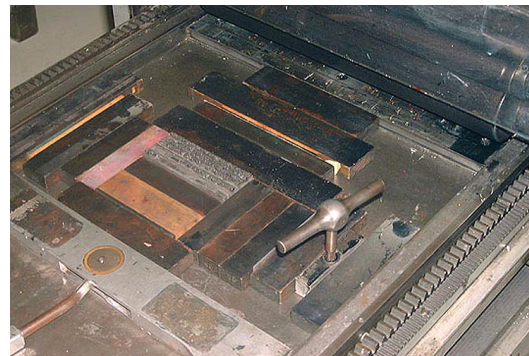
terms still used today. These drawers were divided into separate compartments. The upper case characters were divided into equal compartments, whereas, the lower case characters had unequal divisions. The printers were aware that vowels and some consonants were used more frequently than other consonants, so they divided their drawers accordingly, with the most common characters in the middle.

Most of the type was used for newspapers, so it was generally on the small size, although there were several styles to choose from. The printer would take out the appropriate drawer and place it on the angled surface, known as the composing table. He would then take the individual pieces of type, known as characters, and place them in his composing stick (bottom left photo). Because the final image was pressed against the characters, they needed to be in reverse and backwards. Take a look at an



Typical character:
Notice these were solid metal and there was no way to set them closer to another character, in width or height.

old typewriter or a rubber stamp, and you will see the image or character is reversed. This was tedious and time consuming to say the least. The composing stick had one side that was adjustable. This would be used to make the proper width for the column of type. The printer would pain



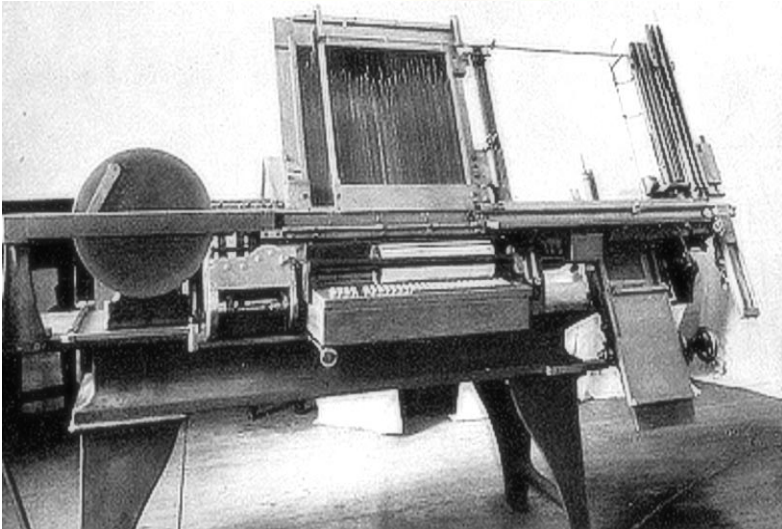
stakingly set all of the type and once the composing stick was full, the printer would then lock it into the galley, with blocks. Then ink would be applied to the type and pressed against paper. The image would offset onto the paper and then proofread for errors.



Typical character:
Notice these were solid metal and there was no way to set them closer to another character, in width or height.

As technology advanced, so did typesetting. The old style drawers and characters were replaced with a more advanced system. The early typesetting machines very closely resembled a typewriter, however, the type style and size could be changed.

There was a lead ball in the center of the machine, with all of the characters cast onto it. This ball would turn as the operator typed on the keyboard. The reason for using a ball, as opposed to the more traditional typewriter style arms, was precision. It was very important the characters lined up properly, and this was better done with a ball configuration. The characters would be offset through a ribbon of ink, onto a very high quality rigid paper. This became known as galley type. The surface of this galley type was extremely fragile and needed to be handled with care. If it got scratched or creased, it was ruined, and would need to be done again completely. Further advances in technology, more importantly high resolution photography, allowed larger type to be set using a camera (pictured left). Photo typesetting was born!

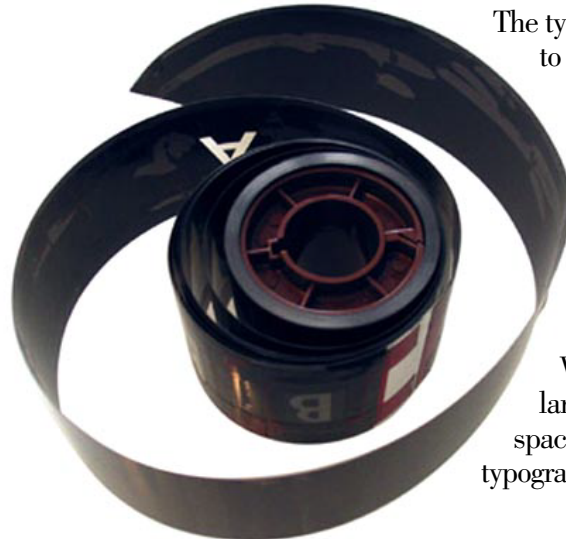


This was revolutionary to the printing world. Now the operator could set large headline type and it was much more durable than the inked version. The machine was cumbersome to say the least, and needed to be used in a darkroom, with a red bulb being the only light source.

Again through advances of technology, the first filmstrip style photo typesetter was developed (bottom left). This was a more vertical machine that required less floor space and did not require a darkroom for operation. There was a compartment that was light tight, that the film strip was loaded into. Any amount of light leaking in would expose the film and make it useless. Once the film strip was loaded in, the operator could command the machine for a variety of different sizes.

The typesetter would focus light through a lens to make the different sizes. This was a huge improvement over the older style machines and led the way to more creativity with typography.

Because the characters were exposed through light, the spacing between each could be adjusted to the designer's liking. This allowed even more creativity for the designer. When you look at magazine ads with large headline type, notice the tight spacing, this is called *Kerning*. A good typographer will adjust characters individually.





A typical designer's studio would resemble what you see to the left. Notice the drawing boards are at the same angle that the early day printers used for their composing. Very often these tables were set at a height that the designer could either stand, or sit on a stool. There were several tasks being done at one time, so the designer would usually be more comfortable standing so they could go from one task to the next more easily.

During the late 1980s digital typesetting became a reality. This was a remarkable breakthrough. The machine could now store up to 16 families of type, known as fonts, and could set them in just about any size imaginable. The crispness and clarity of the digital type was incredible. Exposure was no longer done through lenses, but was now literally burned onto the paper with a laser. The creative window for the designer had opened even wider!

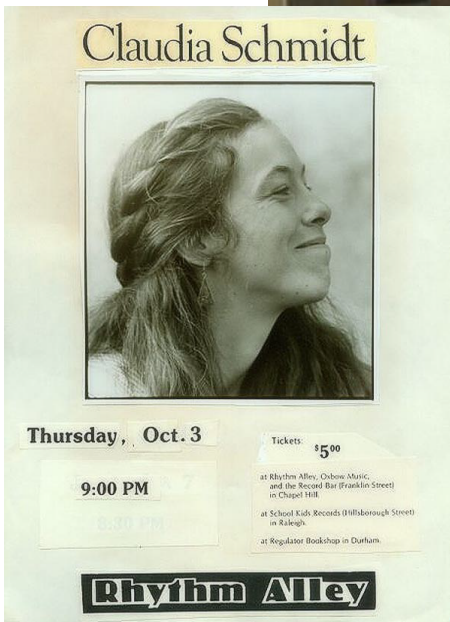
As with the very first typesetting machines, the raw type was output onto paper. This was still referred to as galley type. These galleys only came in two widths, eight inches or twelve. Most designers purchased their typesetting from a "type house", and it generally required several days for the job to be set. Once the marker drawing, or comp, was approved, the designer would then need to calculate the exact size of the type so it would fit properly into the design. This process was called type specing. There were tools and formulas to make these calculations with, but it required a considerable amount

of time. And, if the type ran too long or too short, it would need to be set again, resulting in lost time and money. Even though the technology was quite advanced, the operator of the typesetting machine simply followed the instructions of the designer. These machines

were commanded through computer code only, and you did not see your results until the type was processed. What You See Is What You Get (WYSIWYG) came later on with the first of the desktop systems.

Once the galley type came back from the type house, it needed to be prepared for the printer. This was done by applying the type, photos, logos, etc. onto a rigid board stock, known as a mechanical, or paste up. The designer would apply an adhesive to the back of the images, mount them on his drawing board and cut the pieces out. Once cut out the designer would then paste them onto the mechanical, being certain that everything was level and square. This is where the terms cut and paste came from.

Varityper Digital Typesetting machine: Circa 1989



Preparing a mechanical:

The more time and precision that the designer used in preparing their paste up work, the better the end result was. The mechanical above was hastily put together and the end result is lacking appeal, the woman's name is not even centered properly over her picture.

Whereas, the designer pictured above is taking great care and precision in preparing his work. You can tell quite easily which piece will look better when completed. These paste ups were done using an X-acto knife and precision was the key to a great result at the print shop.

