

Project 3. Alphabet & Broadside Design

Overview

Using a text excerpt of your choosing for inspiration, custom design an alphabet that embodies the spirit of your text. Depending on your text, choose either a modular design method or a design method based on a physical material or environment. Once you have designed the full alphabet, use it in combination with a digital typeface available in Illustrator/InDesign/Photoshop in the AML to create a broadside, or poster, to showcase your text excerpt. On the broadside, use your custom alphabet for heading or display text and the digital typeface for text that requires extended reading. Create an engaging design for the broadside using your two typefaces combined with careful choices about position, scale, and color.

Readings

Modularity and additional pages (Lupton/Phillips, 63, 96–99, 158–173)

Thinking with Type: Letter <http://thinkingwithtype.com/contents/letter/>

Thinking with Type: Text <http://thinkingwithtype.com/contents/text/>

1. Choose and Analyze a Text

Choose a text excerpt that you'd like to use to inspire both your custom typeface design and your broadside. It may be poetry, fiction, nonfiction, or an alternative type of text, such as a list, as long as you think it will compel you to make interesting visual choices, and as long as it is of decent length (several paragraphs or equivalent is ideal).

Consider the subject matter and spirit of your chosen text. *What story does it tell? What mood does it set? How does it make you feel? How do you want it to affect other readers?* Use these ideas to develop your own set of rules for creating a new typeface that will be used to showcase your text, engaging potential readers. As noted in Lupton/Phillips, “a well-defined constraint can free up the thought process by taking some decisions off the table.” This is your chance as a designer to explore creating your own rules and sticking to them.

2. Alphabet Design

Develop your alphabet-building rules according to either a **modular method** or a **materials-based method**. Choose carefully, considering how your *method* will affect the appearance of your typeface. Regardless of which method you choose and what your unique rules say, you will strive to create an alphabet with common characteristics such as *weight*, *proportion*, and *density*. How will your *method* affect the *intrinsic proportions* and *visual impression* of your alphabet? And will this visual impression be appropriate for the spirit of the text you wish to showcase?

You will design all 26 letters of the alphabet, even though you may not use all of them on your broadside. Part of your final presentation will include a full alphabet, A to Z, as well as a *pangram*, a sentence that uses all letters of the alphabet, such as “The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog.” You may choose to design uppercase or lowercase letters, or both for extra credit.

Modular Method

Define a fixed element to be used within a larger system or structure, such as a grid. Choose what your fixed element(s) is/are and how they may fit together to build the 26 letters of your alphabet.



Examples

Modular Lettering

gdbasics.com/html/figure/designProblem3.html

Clean and Dirty Systems

gdbasics.com/html/modularity/designProblem1.html

Modular Alphabet

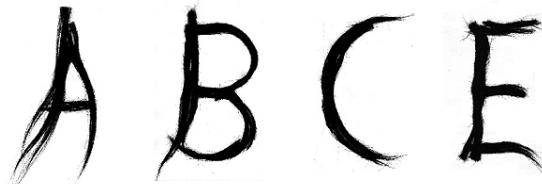
gdbasics.com/html/modularity/designProblem2.html

Project: Letterforms

thinkingwithtype.com/contents/letter/#Project:_Letterforms

Materials-Based Method

Use a physical material or environment to build the 26 letters of your alphabet. Allow the limitations and opportunities offered by the physical nature of the material/environment to help you define alphabet-building rules.



Examples

Figure/Ground

gdbasics.com/html/figure/figure.html

Ready-Made

gdbasics.com/html/modularity/designProblem3.html

Rick Valicenti's Playground Experiment

www.playplayplayplay.com/

Typographic Anatomy to Consider

- Uppercase or lowercase? (if lowercase, consider x-height, ascenders, descenders)
- Serif or sans serif?
- Height: Top of capital letter to bottom of lowest descender
- Set width: Condensed, compressed, normal, wide, extended?
- How much contrast?
- Upright or angled posture?
- Humanist/organic? Geometric/abstract?
- How do the curved parts of the letters relate to the straight parts?

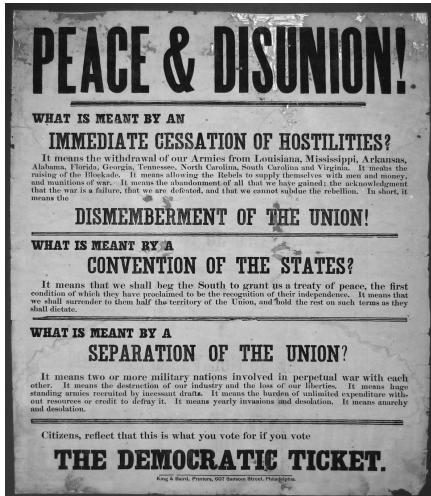
Technical Specifications

- Regardless of which method you choose create your alphabet, you will need to bring your letters into the digital realm, even if they are based on physical materials. If you choose a materials-based method, make sure you can work with scans or photos at a high resolution.
- You may use Illustrator, InDesign or Photoshop as you develop your alphabet. Eventually we will discuss some specific type settings such as *line spacing (leading)*, *letterspacing (tracking)*, *kerning*, and *alignment*, which you will have access to in all these programs.

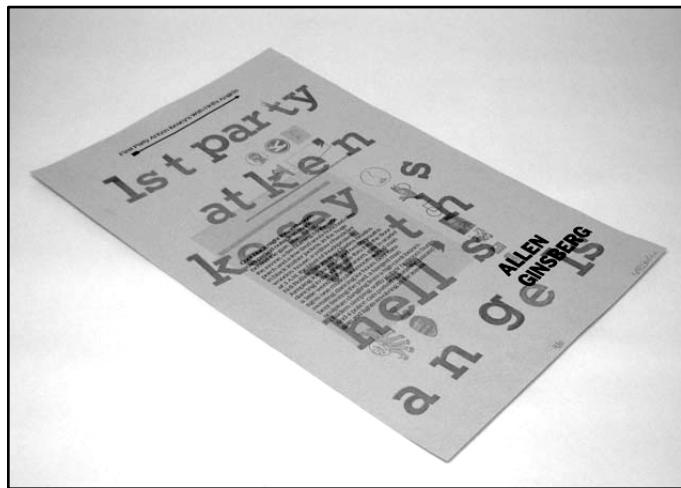
3. Broadside Design

A **broadside** is a large sheet of paper with text, intended for hanging on a wall. Historically, broadsides were used as announcements or advertisements. Today they are commonly used by small printers and publishers as a form of fine art print, often showcasing poems.

Broadside as Announcement



Broadside as Fine Art / Literature



Design a broadside to showcase the text you chose and the alphabet you designed for it. Like your alphabet design, your broadside design should embody the spirit of your text (reproduce the full excerpt on the broadside). Your design should pair your custom-designed typeface with a digital typeface that is available on the Adobe design programs in the AML: Use your custom typeface mainly as *display type* and the other typeface to set text for extended reading. Don't use additional illustrations. Create an engaging visualization using typography and consideration of position, alignment, scale, and space.

You will have to manually adjust *line spacing (leading)*, *letterspacing (tracking)*, and *kerning* for your custom typeface. Use the paragraph and character palettes in the Adobe Design programs to set the type of your digital typeface. Make sure the text for extended reading (the majority of your text excerpt) is comfortable to read.

You may choose the exact dimensions of your broadside, but it should be larger than 8.5x11. Alternative printing options will be discussed in class for designs larger than 11x17.

Final Critique & Portfolio

Final presentation must include:

- 11x17 alphabet print, neatly spaced
 - 11x17 pangram print, letterspaced
 - Final Broadside design

Also include:

- Exploratory work
 - Final files (PDF **and** AI or PSD or INDD)