

Typography: Language Made Visible

“Typography,” writes typographer Robert Bringhurst, “is the craft of endowing human language with a durable visual form.” This collection deals with the ways in which language has been and continues to be visualized, and more personally represents a record of my discovery of typography.

Broadly speaking, there are four organizing axes to the collection, presented here chronologically as they emerged in my collecting habits. The first is *typographic praxis*, the second is *typographic history and theory*, the third is *typographic philosophy*, and finally, *significant typographic works* (which could be considered a subcategory of *praxis*).

Although for the majority of its existence typography has been concerned primarily with books (and indeed there many books about books in this collection), I came to realize that there is a vast ocean of typography surrounding us in everything from street signage to the numbers on the buttons of ATMs. Accordingly, this collection has a number of volumes dealing with subjects other than books that use visible language such as maps and cartography, statistical graphs, and wayfinding and signage.

My aim with this collection is to eventually construct a holistic view of typography as visible language. Far too many of the volumes (even many of the excellent works) have a very narrow focus—being either historical overviews, or manifestos and handbooks—and only when all taken together does a larger picture of typography emerge. This picture speaks to the social and cultural significance and of typography both as an act of communication and an act of art.

Collection History

The first volume I acquired was Ellen Lupton’s excellent *Thinking With Type*, ordered through the independent bookstore in my hometown in the spring of 2005. Lupton’s book is one of my favorite volumes about typography. Her balance of scholarship and hands-on practical advice sparked my interest in typography and set the direction of my collecting. Over the course of the next few years, I collected several more volumes (a few also published by the Princeton Architectural press) dealing with typographic practice.

The most significant volume collected in this first period is probably Robert Bringhurst’s *Elements of Typographic Style*, purchased sometime in mid-to-late 2006. Here I encountered both a practical and philosophical treatment of typography, one that sewed the seeds for a more philosophical consideration of the subject.

The third major event in my collecting was the gifting of Edward Tufte’s exquisite books to me by the father of a friend in the summer of 2008. As a statistician, I have always had an interest in statistical graphics and Tufte’s majestic treatment of design, typography, mathematics, and art history convinced me both of the importance of typography in all places where visual communication occurs, but also of the necessity of taking a historical approach.

The next watershed development in my collecting was the purchase of *Wabi Sabi for Artists, Poets, and Designers*. Although not immediately dealing with typography, it was important because it marks the beginning of my thinking about a philosophy of design. Up until this point, I had primarily considered typography to be utilitarian and

straight-forward, albeit with interesting although minor historical deviations from this ideal. *Wabi Sabi's* radically different approach to both design and aesthetics brought the sharp tension between Bringhurst and others with this work to the forefront in my mind. I began to question and examine the philosophical underpinnings of my understanding of typography, both in my readings and in my practice as a typographer. Ultimately, it was this examination that led to my acquisition of many more theoretical and philosophical volumes.

From these inquiries, then, I began to wonder how exactly were these philosophical principles put into play in the works of typographers? How did typographers deal with many of the questions and issues that I was confronting? What were their successes and failures? As a particularly illustrative study, I sought to examine the fascinating life and work of the German typographer Jan Tschichold.

Although many (indeed probably most) great typographers had very developed design philosophies (consider for example the treatises written by Eric Gill, or Stanley Morrison), Tschichold is particularly interesting because he experienced an amazingly radical about-face in his published views on typography. Trained in classical and traditional calligraphy and lettering, Tschichold dramatically broke with tradition in the 1920s when he joined the Bauhaus. While at the Bauhaus, he published a highly influential manifesto of modernist typography, *Die Neue Typografie*, which many have considered to be one of the most masterful works on asymmetric typography ever published. Amazingly though, Tschichold renounced his (at times dogmatic) advocacy of asymmetric typography and instead re-affirmed the return to classically-influenced centered typography. This discontinuity in his work and philosophy allows for an amazing examination of how a typographer dealt with what he considered vexing problems.

I have begun collecting a few books dealing with Jan Tschichold, particularly *The New Typography*, and a volume dealing with book and cover design at Penguin (where Tschichold famously was hired to completely redesign and overhaul the typography of the entire publishing house.) However, I would in future like to collect individual books designed by Tschichold, as primary sources of sorts, showing the development of his personal convictions and practices.

Further Development

As mentioned above, I would like to begin collecting individual volumes designed by various designers as a way to examine their design philosophies and practices. Additionally, I would continue to collect works on the praxis, history and philosophy of typography. Many volumes that I do not currently own have long been out of print, and consequently are quite expensive. A few examples readily spring to mind: Josef Müller-Brockmann's *Raster Systeme Fur Die Visuele Gestaltung*, or Tschichold's *Form of the Book*. I would also like to expand my collection to include non-Western treatments of typography. There have been a number of books published on Arabic and Japanese typography that I would love to acquire, as well as several volumes from the body of work on Cyrillic typography.

Typography: Language Made Visible
Annotated Bibliography

Subject Markers. (*) Praxis (†) History and Theory (‡) Philosophy

Armstrong, Helen. *Graphic Design Theory: Readings from the Field*. New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2009. Paperback. Condition: good.†

Baines, Phil. *Penguin By Design: A Cover Story 1935–2005*. New York: Penguin, 2006. Paperback. Condition: very good.*†

Bertin, Jaques. *Semiology of Graphics: Diagrams, Networks, Maps*. Redlands, CA: Esri Press, 2010. Hardcover. Condition: excellent.*†

Purchased spring of 2010 from Amazon. I have mixed feelings about this volume. On one hand, I am incredibly happy to see a brilliant and foundational work affordably back in print. On the other, I am a bit disgusted by the quality of the edition. The original 1983 edition of the English translation is a beautifully designed volume. The reissued edition features a blindingly white coated paper, and a puzzling insistence by Esri on using comically oversized Times New Roman typeface. The illustrations, however, have been better reproduced (and in some cases enhanced) from the earlier version. Apart from dealing with symbols, colors, and other graphic conventions, Bertin also discusses the uses of letters, labels, and visual hierarchies.

Bildi Grafiks. *Tempus Fugit*. Barcelona: Index Books, 2009. Hardcover. Condition: good.*‡

I purchased this book in the spring of 2012 from Amazon. The book was part of a project to redesign the calendar for the campus student film society into something readable and typographically coherent. This volume represents essentially the only book I could find on the subject of calendar design after many days of searching. It deals with novel arrangements, a dash of history, and a few interesting essays on the nature of time and representation. The many examples pictured in the book show an innovative and flexible use of typography by a handful of designers in thinking about and rethinking calendars. Unfortunately the design of the book itself is rather poor, with a somewhat gimmicky velveteen cover, and pages of nearly unreadable black text set on dark solid colors.

Bierut, Michael. *Seventy-nine Short Essays on Design*. New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2012. Paperback. Condition: excellent.*‡

Bringhurst, Robert. *The Elements of Typographic Style*. 3rd ed. Vancouver: Hartley and Marks, 2004. Paperback. Condition: fair.*†‡

Purchased summer of 2006 from the independent bookstore in my hometown. Without doubt, this is the book I consider to be the definitive handbook on typographic practice. The volume itself is beautifully and elegantly designed and showcases the principles it espouses. At times Bringhurst's writing is dreamy and philosophical, and perhaps it would be closer to the truth to characterize this book as a poetics of typography rather than just a manual. There is also a fairly comprehensive coverage of typographic history, and the last third of the volume is dedicated to a meticulously annotated catalog of typographic specimens, type foundries, and type designers. While other guides to typographic practice can become preachy or dogmatic (i.e. Gill or Morrison), Bringhurst avoids this. The philosophy he puts forward is utilitarian and understated, above all holding the reader (both of his work, and of typographic works in general) in highest regard. In all, a delight.

Brown, Michelle. *Understanding Illuminated Manuscripts: A Guide to Technical Terms*. Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 1994. Paperback. Condition: fair.†

I purchased this book from Amazon in the spring of 2011 for an art history class I was taking taught by Aden Kumler called *The Art of the Book in the Middle Ages*. Both the class and this book were eye-opening, providing an account of the development of the modern book, and also a look at

- the ways in which people organized texts before the advent of printing. I still find medieval manuscripts inspiring as works of visible language. Much of the versatility and humor present in these manuscripts that was lost for centuries after the introduction of the printing press with its unyielding standardization and rigidity has finally been allowed again with the advent of digital type. Indeed, many of the examples of metacognizant marginalia and intertextuality found in medieval manuscripts can come across as almost unnervingly post-modern. Although this book is in the form of a technical guide, the illustrations and examples allow it to serve as a wonderful and inspirational field guide to the textual logic and appearance of books before printing.
- Burke, Christopher. *Paul Renner: The Art of Typography*. London: Hyphen Press, 1998. Paperback. Condition: very good.†‡
Purchased autumn 2009 from Powell's. This biography of Bauhaus typographer and type designer Paul Renner, probably most famous for designing Futura, sheds light on the development of his work and design philosophy.
- Chappell, Warren. *A Short History of the Printed Word*. Boston: Nonpareil Books, 1970. Paperback. Condition: good.†
Purchased in spring 2010 from Powell's. In addition to being an excellent history of printing, this book is delightfully designed by the author. The placement of illustrations and its innovative use of several different styles of running heads and feet make this an excellent study of typographic practice as well. This book was also the first to introduce me to 17th century English printer William Caxton's amusingly named assistant, Wynkyn de Worde.
- Cheng, Karen. *Designing Type*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006. Paperback. Condition: good.*‡
- Chicago Manual of Style*. 15th ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003. Hardcover. Condition: fair.*
Purchased in the spring of 2008 from the independent bookstore in my hometown. I bought this book partially on the recommendation of Ellen Lupton's *Thinking With Type*, but mainly as a celebratory gift to myself on being accepted into the University of Chicago. The book has served me very well on matters of both style and typography, and is wonderfully designed. Little did I know when I purchased this that I would one day have the opportunity to meet the designer!
- Cleveland, William S. *Elements of Graphing Data*. Summit, NJ: Hobart Press, 1994. Hardcover. Condition: excellent.*
Purchased in the winter of 2013 from Amazon.com. Cleveland's amazing books on statistical graphics have long been a favorite of mine. After a long recall war earlier in the year that culminated multiple quarters of renewals, I finally decided to break down and buy this wonderful book. Along with discussing and theorizing about the design and construction of statistical graphics, Cleveland also devotes attention to the functioning of typography in labels, titles, axes and the like.
- Craig, James, William Bevington and Irene Korol Scala. *Designing With Type*. 5th ed. New York: Watson-Guption, 2006. Paperback. Condition: very good.*
- Diringer, David. *The Book Before Printing: Ancient, Medieval and Oriental (Lettering, Calligraphy, Typography)*. Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2011. Paperback. Condition: very good.†
- Elam, Kimberly. *Grid Systems: Principles of Organizing Type*. New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2004. Paperback. Condition: very good.†
———. *Typographic Systems of Design*. New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2007. Paperback. Condition: very good.†
- Felici, James. *The Complete Manual of Typography: A Guide to Setting Perfect Type*. 1st ed. Berkeley: Peachpit Press, 2002. Paperback. Condition: Very Good.*

- Garfield, Simon. *Just My Type: A Book About Fonts*. New York: Gotham Books, 2011. Hardcover. Condition: very good.†
This was a gift from my mother in the spring of 2012, and provides a delightful and informal overview and specimens of many typefaces. I have consulted it both as a specimen book, and as a history book when needed.
- Gibson, David. *The Wayfinding Handbook: Information Design for Public Places*. New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2009. Paperback. Condition: excellent.*‡
Purchased fall of 2012 from Amazon.com. Though initially purchased as a reference for a geography project on wayfinding and urban signage, I realized that a great portion of the book deals with typography along with geometric symbols, and provides a fascinating account of the way letterforms function in the built environment.
- Gill, Eric. *An Essay on Typography*. Jaffrey, NH: David R. Godine, Publisher Inc., 1993. Paperback. Condition: Excellent.*†‡
Purchased sometime in 2009 from the independent bookstore in my hometown. This is a reproduction of Eric Gill's original 1931 landmark treatise on typography and letterforms. Often hilarious, sometimes bizarre and verging on the dogmatic, Gill outlines a theory of what he believes to be typographic best practice and good aesthetics. The book features Gill's trademark pilcrow markers rather than indentations for new paragraphs, and is set in his own beautifully designed typeface, Joanna.
- Haslam, Andrew. *Book Design*. London: Lawrence King Publishing, 2006. Paperback. Condition: Very good.*
- Heller, Steven. *The Education of a Typographer*. New York: Allworth Press, 2004. Paperback. Condition: Very good.‡
- Heller, Steven and Philip B. Meggs. *Texts on Type: Critical Writings on Typography*. New York: Allworth Press, 2001. Paperback. Condition: very good.*‡
Purchased autumn 2012 from Amazon. This is probably the volume from my recent acquisitions that I'm most excited to add. The book is a collection of essays from typographers, type designers, and graphic designers about theory, practice, and design philosophy. Along with Ellen Lupton's *Design Writing Research*, I think it represents one of the more scholarly approaches to typography in the collection, and is representative of one of the directions in which I wish to grow my collection. Although I have not entirely finished reading it yet, the essays I have completed have been quite excellent.
- Hendel, Richard. *On Book Design*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998. Hardcover. Condition: excellent.*†
- Hochuli, Jost and Robin Kinross. *Designing Books: Practice and Theory*. London: Hyphen Press, 2004. Hardcover. Condition: excellent.*†
- Imhof, Eduard. *Cartographic Relief Presentation*. Redlands, CA: Esri Press, 2007. Paperback. Condition: very good.*†
Purchased autumn 2011 from Amazon. The legendary Swiss cartographer masterfully discusses a great number of issues in the design and execution of cartographic maps in this volume. Among them is a treatment of annotation, labeling, and contouring that is directly relevant to typographic practices. This edition features the blinding paper and awkwardly large Times New Roman typesetting that is the hallmark of an Esri press book, and will be replaced with an older out-of-print non-Esri edition when my finances can support it.
- Kinross, Robin. *Modern Typography*. 2nd ed. London: Hyphen Press, 2004. Paperback. Condition: excellent.†‡
Purchased from the Seminary Co-op, fall 2012 (the last purchase I ever made in the old University Ave. location). Kinross's history of modern typography is a Foucaultian archeological approach to how "modern typography got to be the way it is." It is a refreshing break from the historiographies of many design books, and focuses on the interconnected networks of social relationships and

processes that gave birth to modern typography rather than the individual designer and individual typeface.

Koren, Leonard. *Wabi Sabi for Artists, Designers, Poets & Philosophers*. Berkeley: Stone Bridge Press, 2008. Paperback. Condition: excellent.‡

Purchased autumn 2011 from Amazon. Although seemingly the odd one out in this collection, this book was integral to its formation and creation. This volume was my first step into thinking about a philosophy of typography, and a philosophy of design. From this simple consideration finally came the realization that it was possible, and even desirable to consider typography in a larger academic context outside of the purely applied. This is not to say that I agree with all of the views put forward in this volume, in fact I heartily oppose many of them. However, the drastically different approach to thinking about design was incredibly influential, and paved the way for the addition of the many entirely theoretical and philosophical books listed elsewhere in this bibliography.

Lupton, Ellen. *Design Writing Research*. London: Phaidon Press, 1999. Paperback. Condition: good.†‡

———. *Thinking With Type*. 1st ed. New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2004. Paperback. Condition: fair.*

The first book I ever owned on typography, and forever my first love. I purchased this volume in the spring of 2005, and it, along with *The Elements of Typographic Style*, has been a well-thumbed fixture on my desk ever since. Beautifully designed by the author and typeset in Thesis and Scala, it practices the principles it preaches. I have found inspiration (and recommendations for further collecting) in many of the pictured examples. This is the first book I recommend to anyone who asks me about reading a book on typography.

———. *Thinking With Type*. 2nd ed. New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2010. Paperback. Condition: excellent.*

When I saw that a second edition to my first true typographic love had been published I felt compelled to purchase it. And purchase it from Amazon I did. However, I must say that I was somewhat (though not overly) disappointed in the book. The tone of the writing has been slightly changed, to what I feel is slightly more condescending, although the new examples are wonderful, and the section about typography on the web is truly excellent. All in all though, I must say I prefer the first edition.

MacEachren, Alan M. *How Maps Work: Representation, Visualization, and Design*. New York: The Guilford Press, 2004. Paperback. Condition: good.*†

Meggs, Philip B. and Alston W. Purvis. *Meggs' History of Graphic Design*. 4th ed. USA: Wiley, 2004. Hardcover. Condition: good.†

Purchased summer 2011 from Amazon. In addition to providing context to larger movements in graphic design, the book features many wonderful examples and histories of typographic posters and books. This is one of the few textbooks in my collection.

Morrison, Stanley. *First Principles of Typography*. New York: Macmillan, 1936. Hardcover. Condition: good.*‡

Morrison, Stanley and Kenneth Day. *The Typographic Book 1450–1935: A Study of Fine Typography*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963. Hardcover. Condition: Very good.†

Purchased winter 2013 from Amazon. This volume has long been a favorite of mine (again, a perpetual library loan). Oversized and hefty, gleefully celebrating its own impracticality, this tome is filled to choking with sensational examples of exceptional typography. Every time I lug it out I never spend less than half an hour enraptured in its pages. The accompanying commentary (or at least what I've read of it) is quite good as well. It is far too easy, however, to breeze by it in a rush to get to the wonderful illustrations.

- Noordzij, Gerrit. *The Stroke Theory of Writing*. London: Hyphen Press, 2006. Paperback. Condition: very good.†
- Ruder, Emil. *Typographie: A Manual of Design*. Zürich: Niggli Verlag, 2001. Hardcover. Condition: excellent.*‡
 Purchased summer of 2007 from Amazon. Swiss typographer Emil Ruder's manual of design, only recently translated into English and republished, is a magnificent work of modernist typography. Though his treatment of grid systems is not as structured and exhaustive as that of, say, Josef Müller-Brockmann's, I find it to be much more palatable. The sections dealing with the typographically whimsical are truly delightful, and seem to almost anticipate a much more contemporary playfulness and humor. The book features Ruder's iconic "Typographie" reverse block design on the cover, and the interior is trilingual, with text in English, French, and German.
- Samara, Timothy. *Making and Breaking the Grid*. Beverly, MA: Rockport Publishers, 2005. Paperback. Condition: excellent.*
- Tschichold, Jan. *The New Typography*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998. Hardcover. Condition: good.*‡
- Tufte, Edward R. *Envisioning Information*. Cheshire, CT: Graphics Press, 1990. Hardcover. Condition: excellent.
- . *Visual Explanations*. Cheshire, CT: Graphics Press, 1997. Hardcover. Condition: excellent.*†
- . *The Visual Display of Quantitative Information*. 2nd ed. Cheshire, CT: Graphics Press, 2001. Hardcover. Condition: excellent. [Signed by the author]*†
 The Tufte books I currently have in my collection I purchased in the summer of 2011 in preparation to go to one of his classes on information design. This book, and I feel it his most succinct and original of his books (though all are quite excellent), was signed by him after one of the sessions. The original set of Tufte books gifted to me in my collection I re-gifted as a graduation present to a statistician friend in hopes they would inspire her as much as they inspired me. All of Tufte's books are a tour de force, and have an almost neurotically perfect design and execution. Although primarily concerned with information design per se, the volumes deal fairly extensively with typographic problems. Some of his redesigns of railway schedules, for example, are particularly inspired, and his advocacy for incorporating "word sized graphics" directly into text is both novel and charming.
- . *Beautiful Evidence*. Cheshire, CT: Graphics Press, 2006. Hardcover. Condition: excellent.*†
- Updike, Daniel Berkeley. *Printing Types, Their History Forms and Use*. 2 vols. London and New Castle, DE: Oak Knoll Press, 2001. Paperback. Condition: excellent.*†
 Purchased spring of 2102 from Powell's. I have long wanted this wonderful two-volume history of printing types. However, the price had been prohibitively high, and it wasn't until I happened to be browsing the typography section of Powell's that I learned of this incredibly affordably priced reprint of this classic work. Although the exterior and the quality of the printing leaves a bit to be desired, the fact that I could purchase them for a mere \$20 far outweighs any objections I might have for the time being. Updike's work is thorough, scholarly, and well typeset, with a great density of magnificent historical examples.
- Williamson, Hugh. *Methods of Book Design*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983. Paperback. Condition: very good.*†
 Purchased fall 2012 from Amazon. Probably my favorite of the book design books in my collection, this too was a purchase after a long library loan. Williamson's advice (though at times dated on the production technology side of things) is still sound when it comes to composition of pages, page sizes, and type-area proportions. The work was an incredibly useful reference when I was redesigning a student-run journal on campus.