

SPER PROCESS BOOK: LOIS HINSHELWOOD [ESADTYPE 2024]

SPER

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LOIS HINSHELWOOD

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INTRODUCTION

I discovered type design through an interest in letterforms and shapes. Before I knew about type design I had a similar interest in shape and balancing white and dark space but in terms of illustration. When I started to focus this interest towards letters I discovered signwriting and began to learn about drawing and painting letters. Through learning more about signwriting, my interest in fonts grew and led me to type design.

When I came to EsadType I was particularly interested in the more experimental display typefaces. This was partly because drawing these typefaces appealed to me, but also because with crazy display typefaces the feeling that something new has been created is more obvious. To me, making something that had a style and aesthetic that offered something that another existing typeface didn't was an important goal. I now appreciate that this can be done in a more nuanced way.

When I started my project, I felt that the way I could create something that felt obviously new was to experiment with the structure of the letters.

OBJECT OF INTEREST

NAOM GABO

While I was researching for my project I came across some mono prints made by the sculptor Noam Gabo. Like Gabo's sculptures, these prints stem from 'scientifically plotted arcs' and explore the abstraction of shape and gesture [1]. These prints inspired me to draw letters and were a starting point for me to illustrate an aesthetic language that I was struggling to articulate.

On the one hand, the prints demonstrated a vocabulary of form and conveyed a feeling that I wanted for my typeface. The shapes that Gabo carved out of wood illustrates the movement of the hand. There are big open curves and organic forms that show the imperfections of using hand held tools. Yet, there is also something mechanical about the artwork. Gabo explained that 'Opus 6' [Fig 1] was the original sketch for a sculpture, and you can see how this structural thinking gives the work a calculated quality [2]. While wanting to create a typeface that embodied organic forms and gesture, I also understand that there is similarly a mechanical aspect to a typographic system.

- [1] REED, S.W. 1984. *The Modern Art of the Print: Selections from the Collection of Lois and Michael Torf*. ed. CLIFFORD ACKLEY. Boston: Museum of Fine Arts.
- [2] ALLEY, R. 1981. *Catalogue of the Tate Gallery's Collection of Modern Art other than Works by British Artists*. London: Philip Wilson Publishers Ltd.

Figure 1.
'Opus 6'. Noam Gabo.
Monoprint from wood
engraving on paper.
1955-6



As well as the shapes and forms that capture the movement of Gabo's hand, I was drawn to the artwork as I felt it had a typographic aspect. Although they are not letters at all, I felt that the prints possessed similar qualities to letterforms, and maybe if they were part of a larger system they could be recognised as letters. Perhaps the distinction between an abstract shape and a letter relies not only on its construction, but more on it being part of a system. This could allow room for more experimental designs, as when seen in context, shapes can be recognised as a letter. The boundaries between art and a letter became intriguing to me.



Figure 2.
'Opus 7.'
Noam Gabo.
Mono print from wood
engraving on paper.

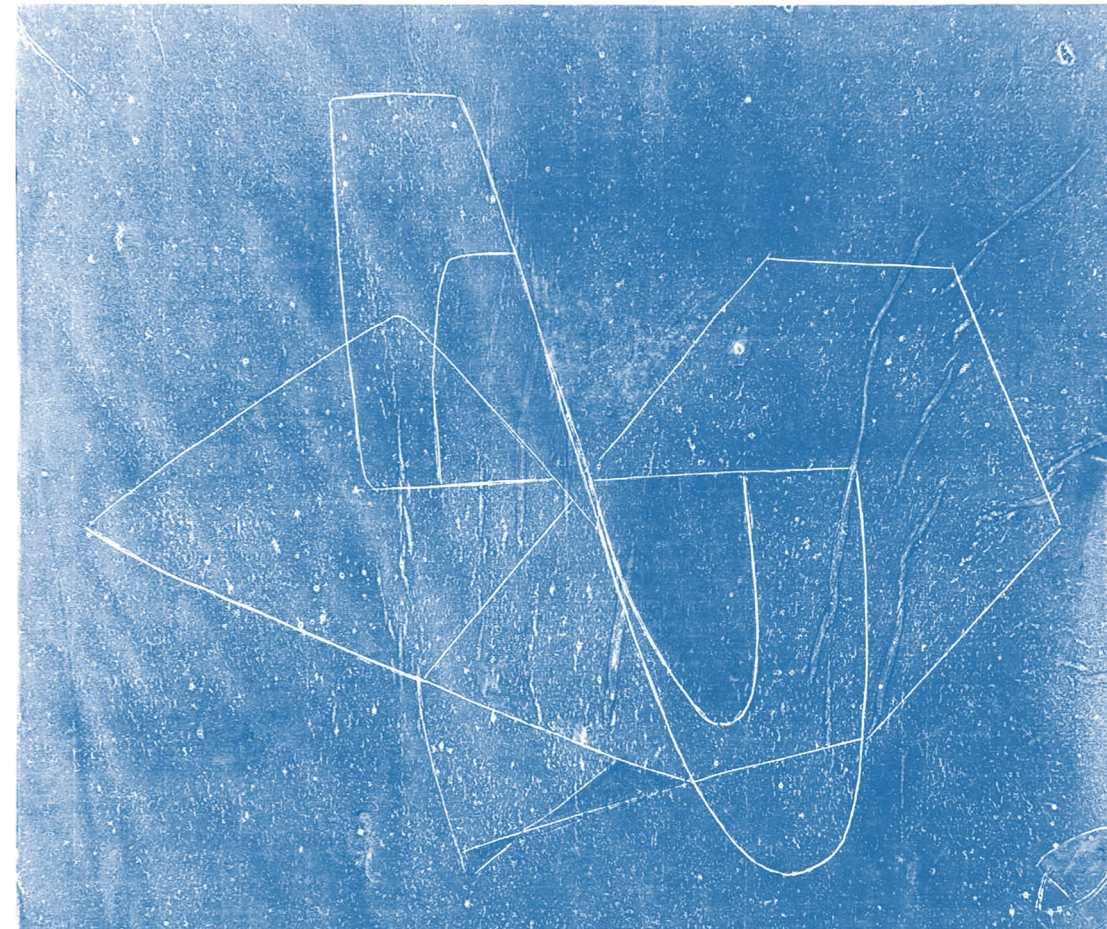


Figure 3.
'Opus 10.'
Noam Gabo.
Mono print from wood
engraving on paper.

CULTURE OF WRITING

I continued my research, taking the language of form and notions of abstraction that I established through Noam Gabo, and searched for examples of lettering that showed similar themes. I became intrigued by Italian hand and early 1600s Dutch calligraphy, such as the work of Maria Strick [Figure 4] and Jan Van de Velde [Figure 5]. Unlike Gabo's artwork there is a formality to this lettering as there are observed rules to make shapes that are recognised as letters. However, there is also a similar approach to form in terms of big curves that show the gesture and imperfections of the hand as well as ideas of more abstract shapes.

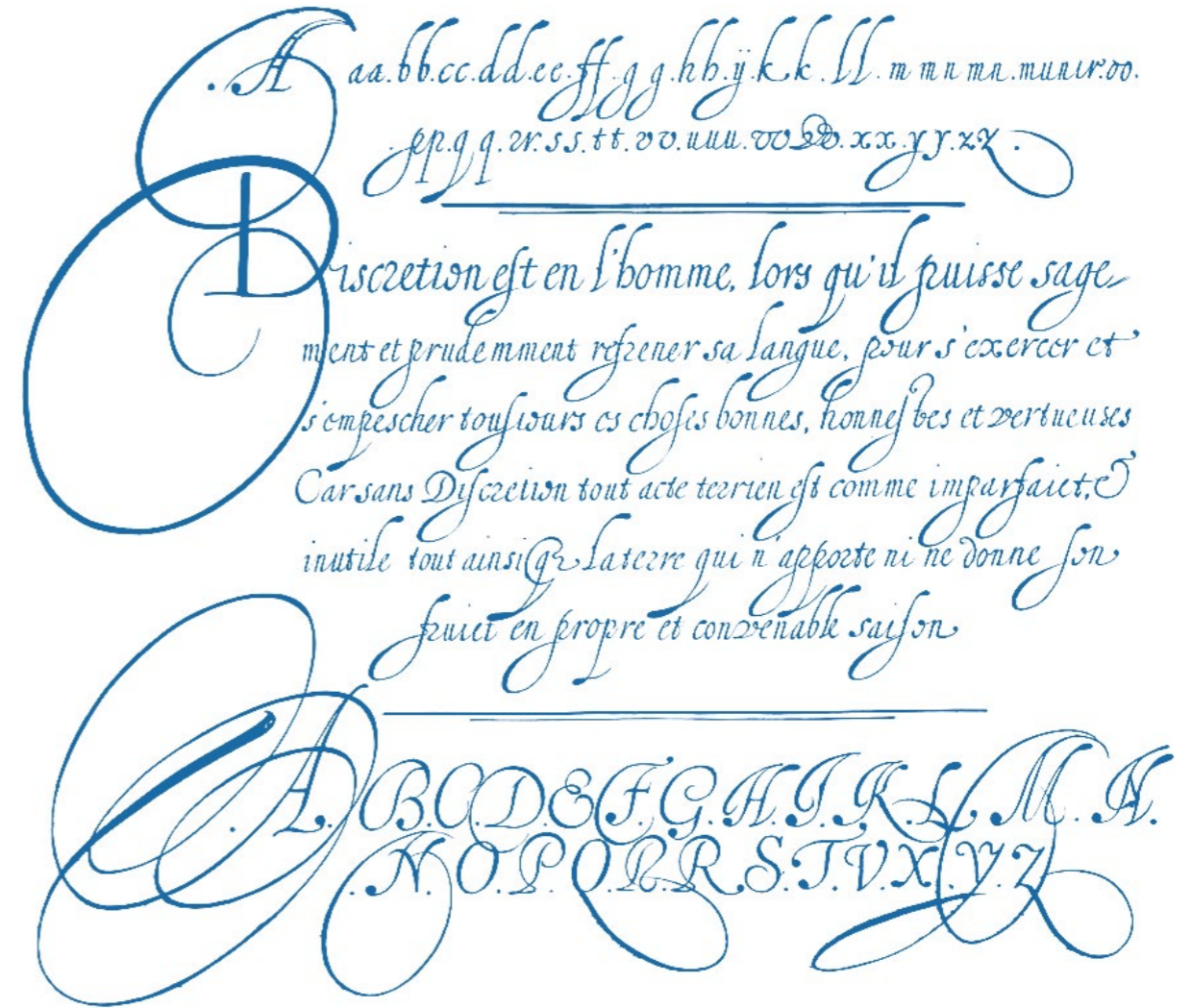


Figure 4.
 Maria Strick
 Toonel der Lofijcke
 Schrijffen
 1970 Facsimile of 1607
 writing manual

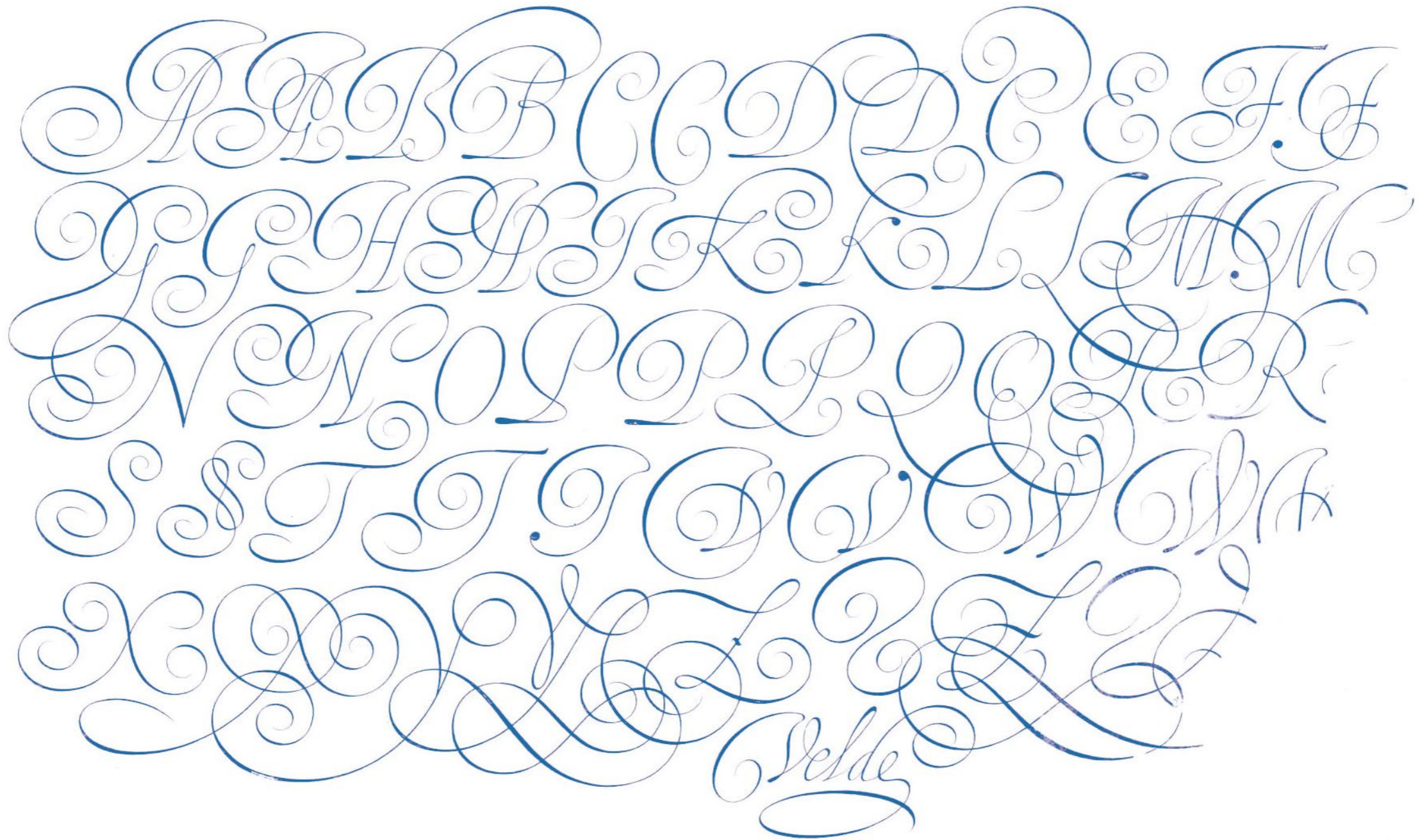


Figure 5.
Jan Van de Velde
Spiegel der Schijfkon-
ste, 1605.

Velde and Strick both use swashes and the ductus to alter the structure of letterforms. They create intertwining structures in which the tool does not leave the surface and the construction of the letters overlap in parts, as you can see in Figure 6. This gives a notion of speed to the design while remaining very elegant. As well as letters intertwining with themselves, they also overflow from the usual space that you would expect a letter to occupy and interact with other letters. In Figure 7 you can see how these flourished letters reach out and claim the space from their neighbour, yet overall the lettering remains balanced. There are also some fragmented structures in which the ductus doesn't connect to the adjacent part of the letter, as in Figure 8. This is most likely a consequence of the speed of writing, but it results in an interesting construction. Unlike the overlapping swashes that complicate the structures, these fragmented parts simplify the letterform and allows the mind to fill in the gaps.

These calligraphers play with the structure of Latin letterforms through a style of writing that conveys speed and elegance. This became a guide and reference point around which to base my project.

I planned to use this historical model as a basis for my interpretations which would follow a similar narrative in terms of gesture, to develop a typeface that features overlapping and intertwining letters, that re-imagines conventional structures. My aim was to design a typeface in which you can create an image through text to give the feeling of readable art. From the outset, I was motivated to design something that was legible as I wanted it to function, even though that might only be possible at very large sizes.



Figure 6.
Capital P. Jan Van de
Velde Spiegel der
Schijfkonste, 1605.



Figure 8.
Capital R. Maria Strick,
Toonel der Lofijcke
Schrijfpen.



Figure 7.
Capital G, N. Jan
Van de Velde Spiegel
der Schijfkonste, 1605.

**THE
DISPLAY
CAPITALS**



h o z d



A M G S



A B O



C D B

Some early sketches in March 2023, testing out how I might implement some of the shapes I had been looking at.

CALLIGRAPHY

Shape research is at the core of this project. To get a better understanding of the calligraphic sources, I began to study the source and replicate the structures to understand the ductus.

I then continued to use the pointed pen while starting to experiment with how I could 'break' the structures. Spending time with the source meant I had a good idea of how the calligraphers built letters, so when it came to this phase of reinvention I was able to create iterations following a similar logic, but not tied to the source. I found that getting into a flow of writing gave a certain rhythm to trying ideas. It almost took away the need to think too much about the structures I was drawing. If they didn't work I could write a new word and try a new structure.



I identified elements of the source that I liked and wanted to carry forward to my design.

A B C D E F G
H I J K L M N
O P Q R S T U V W X
Y Z
Delaney

ART NOUVEAU

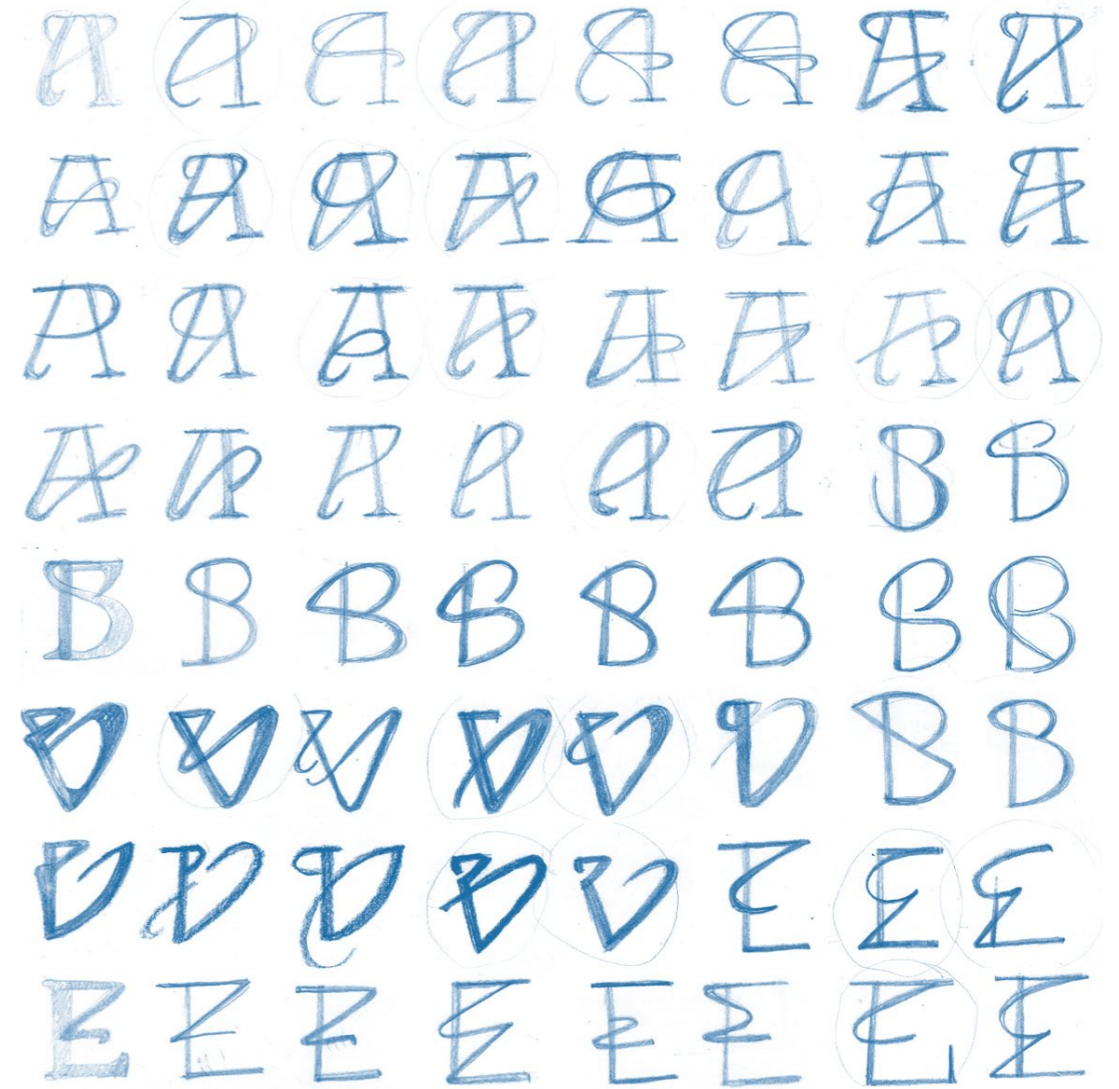
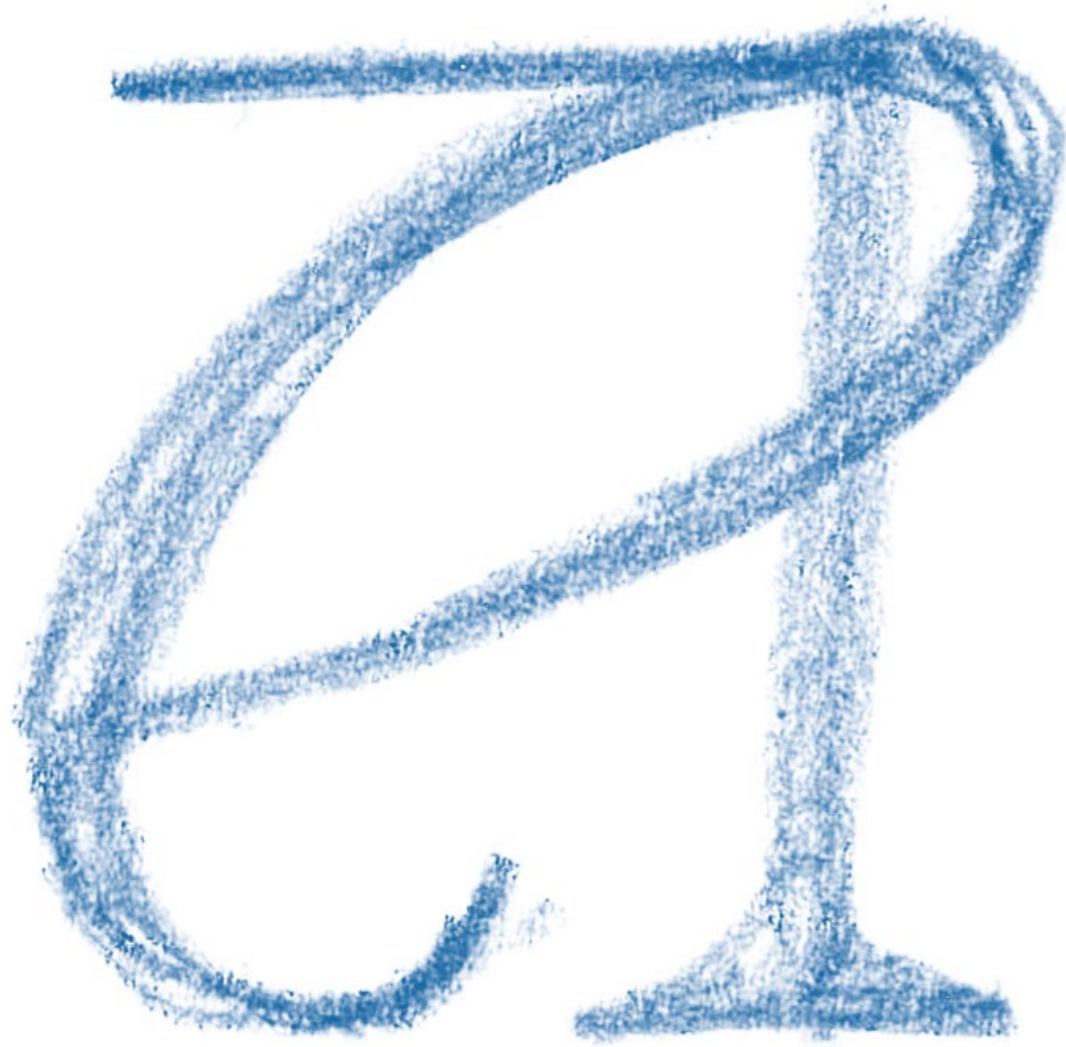
The capitals I had been making with the pointed pen calligraphy started to show some similarities to Art Nouveau lettering, so I embraced this and started to look at some Art Nouveau references. I selected specific letters from these references that shared similarities to the structures I had been exploring. From these, I made sketches that combined the Art Nouveau references with the shapes I had created during the calligraphy. For this process, I decided to focus on one letter at a time as I felt this allowed me to get absorbed in the different possible iterations.

Similarly to the rhythm of writing in calligraphy, drawing a lot of versions of each letter allowed me to build on ideas and get into a flow to develop structures. Trying out an idea on paper and not thinking too much about what I was drawing meant that I didn't restrict myself to only drawing things I thought would work. This allowed me to create some shapes that I would not otherwise have thought of. It also meant that I tried a lot of ideas and produced many versions of each letter, with the thinking that through producing a lot I could then look back and pick out structures that were worthwhile perusing.

This process consisted of first identifying an interesting structure from the various Art Nouveau references that I had collected. I then took that structure and altered it in different ways. I wasn't looking at the calligraphic structures here but as I had them in my mind the sketches resembled similarities to the structures that I had been looking at in the calligraphy.



Figure 9.
Designed by Otto Weisert, 1904. Typographie Art Nouveau. Les Editions Du Carrousel.





PORTE

DESSINS

7 MODÈLE 8

DÉCORATEURS

ENCRE 69 PLUME

PORTRAIT AU FUSAIN

68 MANUEL 86 23 GÉOMÉTRIE 45

LE BARBIER DE SÉVILLE NOS ÉCRIVAINS CÉLÈBRES

Figure 10.
Deberny and Peignot
Foundry, Paris. Typog-
raphie Art Nouveau. Les
Editions Du Carrousel.

A B C D E
 F G H I J
 K L M N O
 P Q R S T U
 V W X Y Z



Figure 11.
 Seigfried. Alphabet
 Berlin, 1900. Typogra-
 phie Art Nouveau. Les
 Editions Du Carrousel.



Figure 12.
Alphabet v. Typogra-
phie Art Nouveau. Les
Editions Du Carrousel.



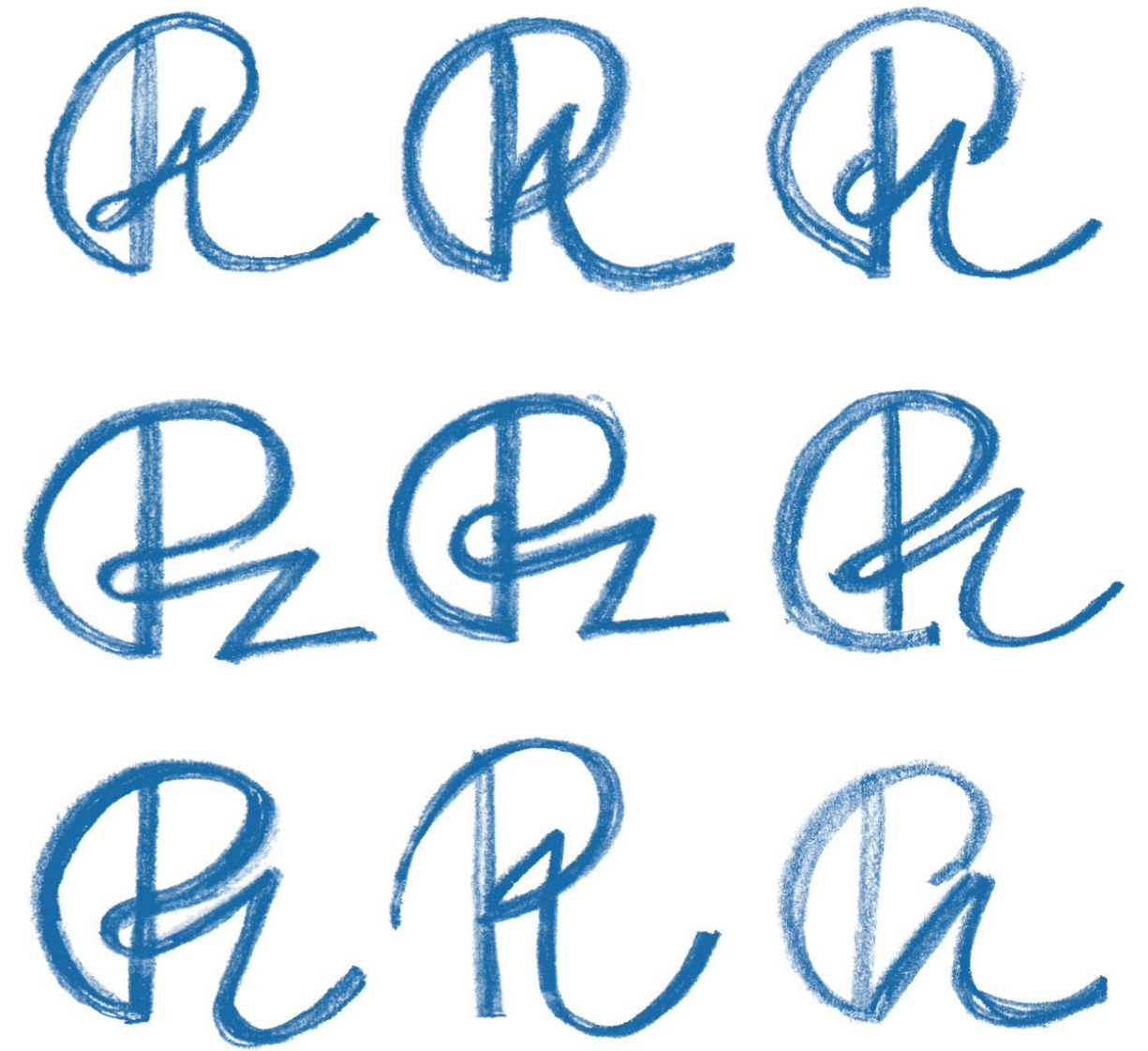
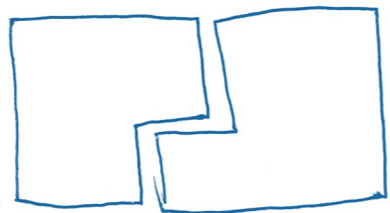


Figure 13.
La lettre Art nouveau en
France

DIGITALISATION

After I had identified some interesting structures in my sketches I moved to digitising to see how these shapes would work in type. As I was trying to understand questions related to structure I decided to not focus on the 'flesh' of the design in terms of weight, contrast and stroke endings. Creating a monolinear design with little contrast meant that the structures that I was exploring were the focal point of the design. It was also the logical decision to start by drawing a light weight as I was creating a design that had these overlapping aspects.

I had been drawing lots of different shapes and letter forms in an attempt to find interesting structures so a challenge was to create a typographic system from these explorations. To establish a system I tried to make letters that fit into a formula of reaching out to the left and having a space to receive the previous letter on the right.



[3]

[3] The idea behind the system was to have letters that reach out to the left and have a space to receive on the right. Imagining the letters as puzzle like pieces helped to understand that any connection should take place in the middle of the baseline and cap height.

[4] May 2023. My few first digitisations were pretty messy and I was struggling to make the structures that I had created fit the system that I outlined.

[4]



I was getting a bit lost in trying to create a system that had parts that interacted with each other but wasn't a mess. As a way to take a step back and find a new perspective, I rationalised the design by simplifying the shapes so that they were not connected or trying to reach out and overlap with each other. This allowed me to find a much more systematic approach using the kinds of structures I had drawn. Rationalising my design in this way reassured me that it was possible to have a systematic approach with these shapes. This exercise also showed me there was a benefit to having letters that interacted with each other as it enriched the design.

I took this rationalised design and reduced the tracking to explore how much overlap was desirable. The feedback that I got from this exercise ranged quite a lot. Some felt that giving the letters some room to breathe was beneficial, and suggested to have less overlapping in the design. I agreed with this, however, I was still keen to try and pursue the challenge of creating a sort of image with these text. I had an expectation of the results I wanted, but I just hadn't quite found the solutions yet.

Other teachers felt that I should really push this idea of having letters that interact and take it to the extreme. They said that it was a worthwhile pursuit and presented an interesting challenge.

[5] This was the more rationalised spacing that some of my teachers were in favour of.

[6] And this was the more extreme direction that others were interested for me to explore.

Tracking 0

[5] Tracking -100

Tracking -200

Tracking -250

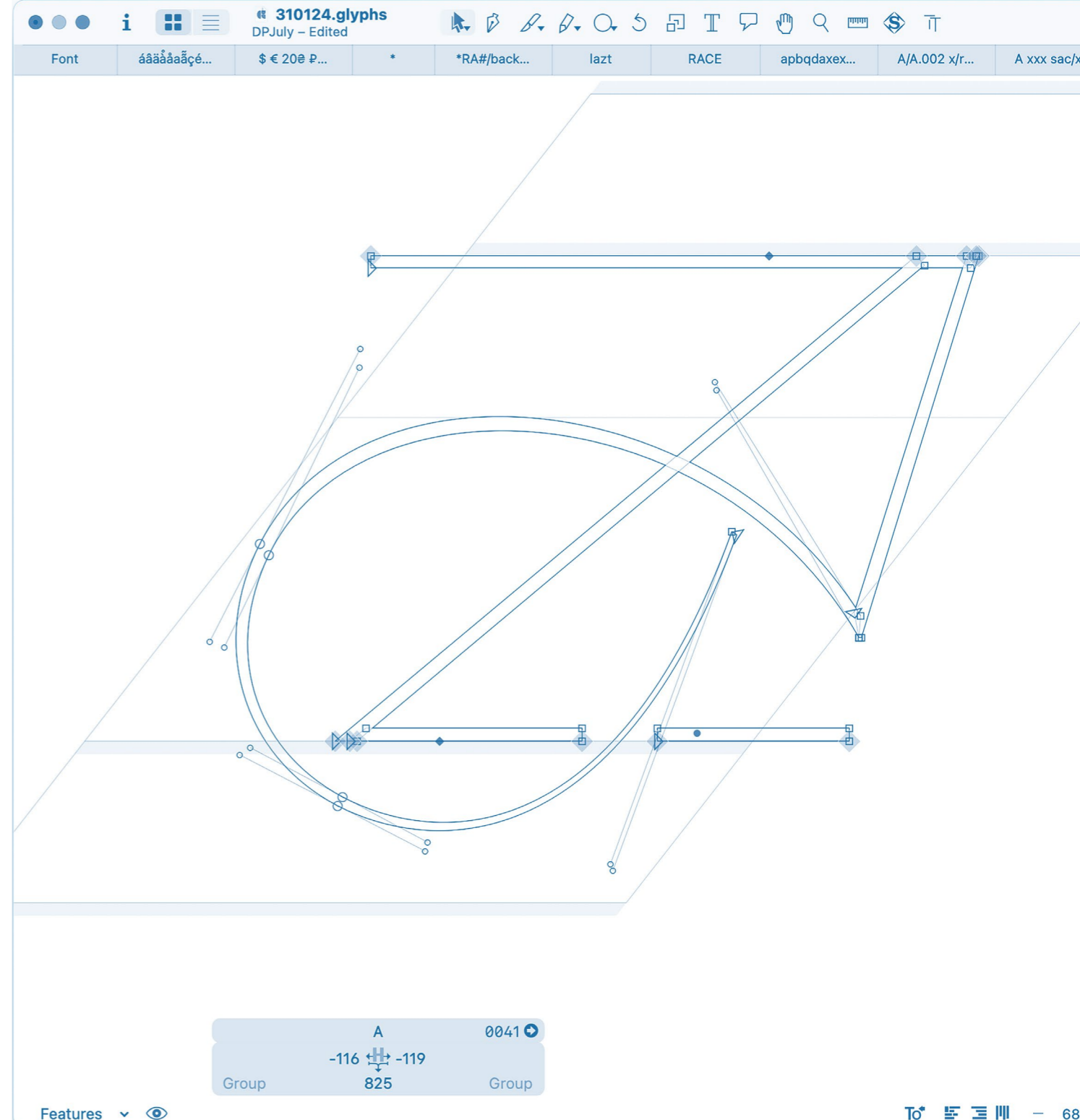
Tracking -300

[6] Tracking -350

Tracking -400

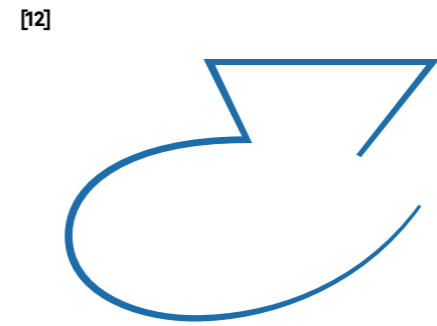
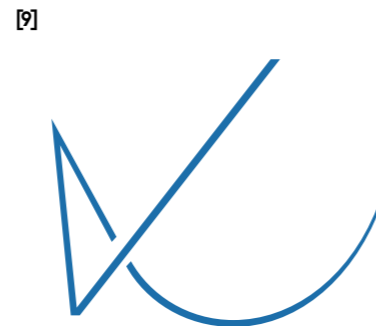
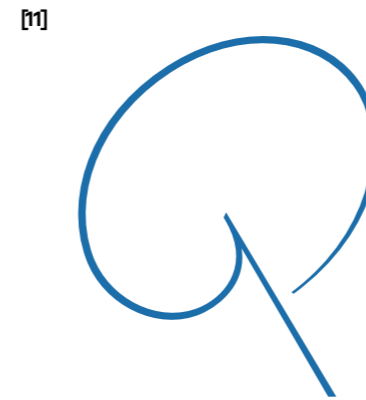
Working from this rationalised version I reintroduce the swashes and overlap to the design, starting with a small character I focused on to stabilising the system and then slowly building from this.

These swashed capitals have consisted of a lot of trial and error, searching for structures that would work. I have worked through the glyph set to find solutions to the structure of each letter, trying different iterations and seeing how they work in the system. There are not many repeating structures in the system, so the process of finding solutions has been more of a puzzle to find the right Structure. This has meant drawing many different structures and testing them in the system.

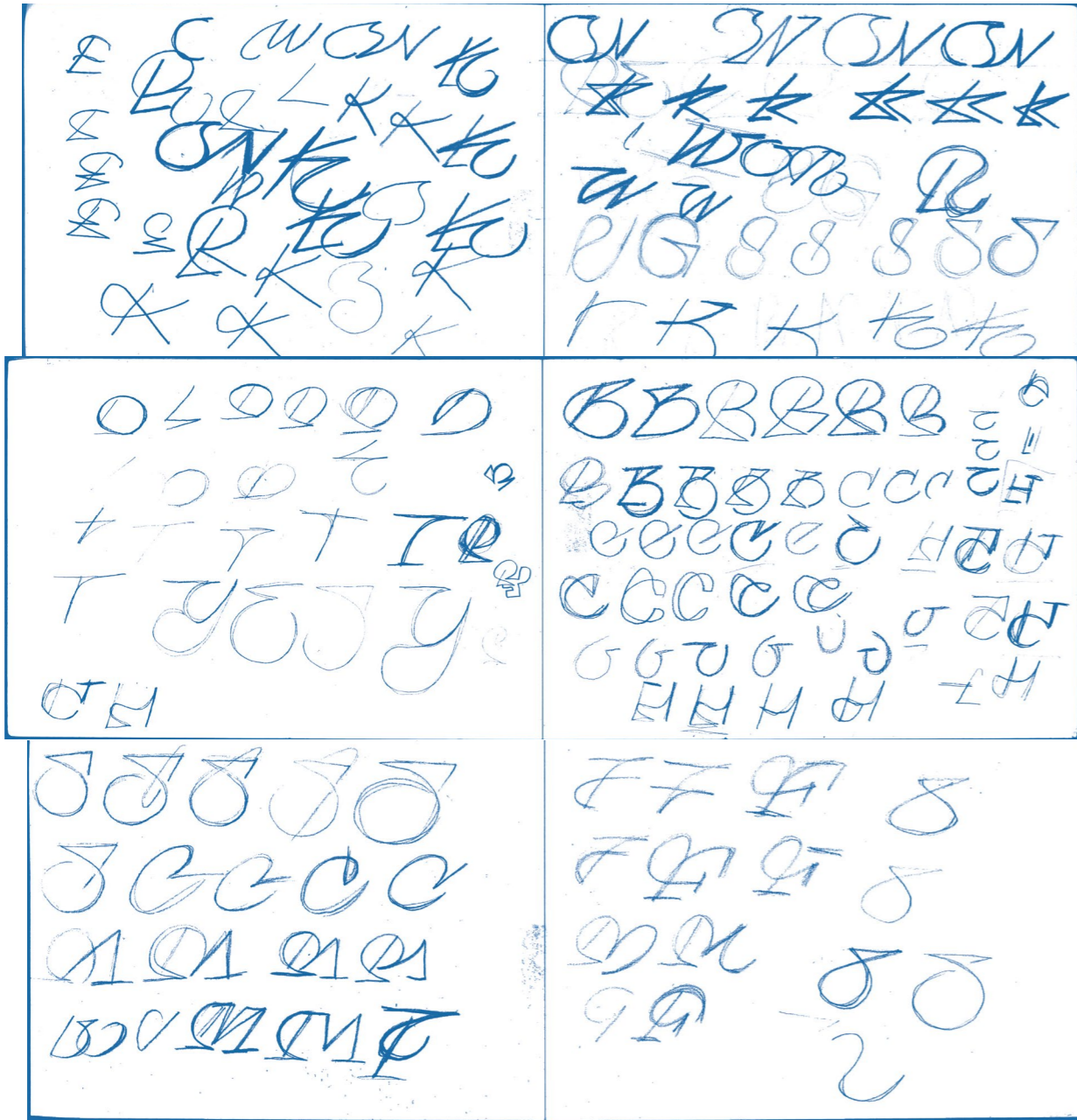


The process of designing this style was largely finding specific solutions for the structure of each glyph. In my search for structures, some glyphs were solved fairly early on. The design is very much based on the contrast of big curved and more angular shapes. This inevitably meant that some letter shapes fit well into this system.

Letters that already have the presence of curves and straights were relatively straight forward to find solutions. Round letters were also favoured in this formula as the gesture favoured introducing a straight feature to a round letter.



- [7] The ductus of the P allowed room for big curves
- [8] Although the O is entirely round there were logical ways to introduce angular parts
- [9] I returned to the gesture to add some curved element to this structure
- [10] This suited the presence of swash
- [11] The Q was a logical structure once I had established the O.
- [12] This E structure is a result of Art Nouveau references and the gesture of the hand
- [13] Opportunity for curves to intersect with more angular shapes
- [14] This took more time to work through but I was sure to find a solution as there is already a mix of curved and angular components in the G structure.
- [15] I was able to introduce some straight lines in the S structure that made sense in terms of gesture.

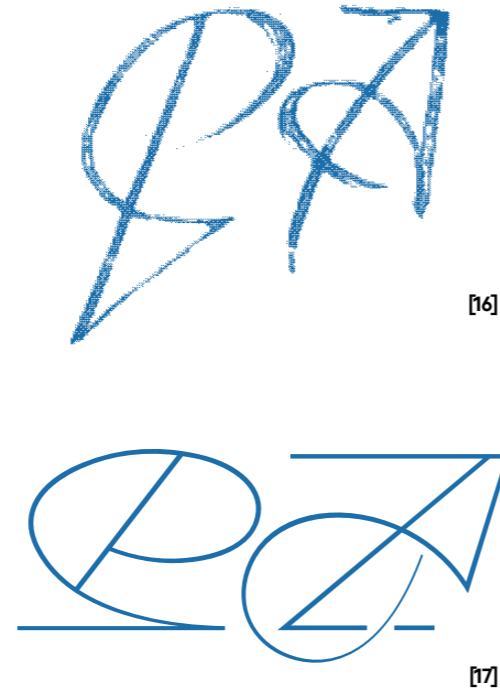


As the art direction is very much rooted in a culture of writing, solutions have needed to be worked through by using the gesture of the hand. Throughout the digital process I have kept a sketchbook beside me and gone back and forth between using pen and paper to find structures and then testing them digitally. These sketches consisted of simple line drawings just to work through possible structures. The sketches are sort of like my thought process, using a pencil to try something out or to work through possible options and. If I drew something that I thought would be a possible solution I'd either do a more developed sketch or go directly to drawing in Glyphs.

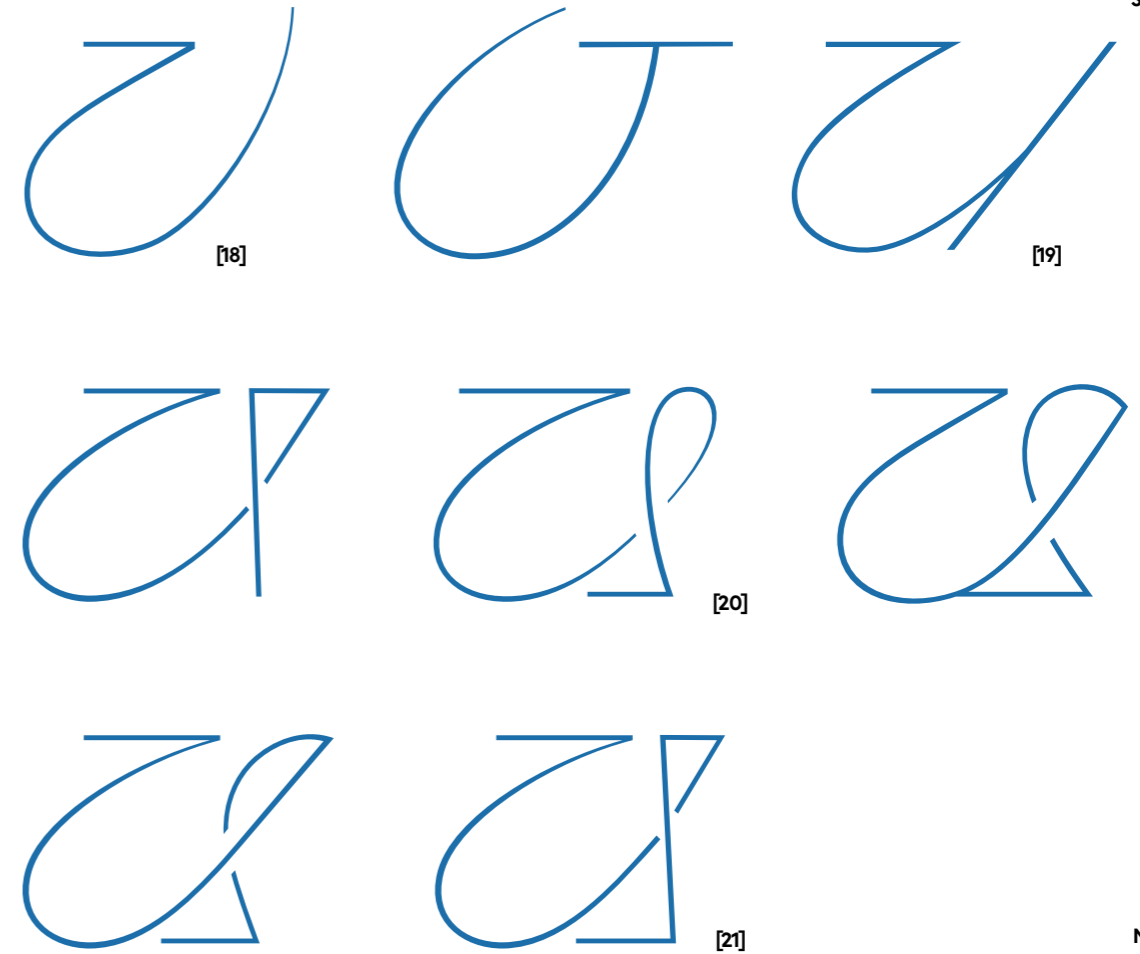
Spreads from my sketchbook that I kept next to me while working on the computer.

Some structures, such as the 'P' and 'A' took almost the same form as the initial calligraphy part of part of my practical research. Like the rest of the shapes I was researching, following the calligraphy, I sketched many iterations and explored a lot of possibilities for the 'P' and 'A', but for these glyphs, I decided to go with something largely based on my first exploration. There were not a lot of other glyphs to follow this rather linear process from calligraphy to type design. Through creating my system it was the more concrete structures like these that I turned to when I was unsure how to solve a design issue of another letter. I've used some structures that I solved earlier in the process as landmarks to build the typeface around.

Other glyphs have required a lot of sketching and I have had to try many different structures out until I found something that worked with the system.



[16] Initial calligraphy research
 [17] Final structures are not too dissimilar calligraphy



[18] In this early 'U' the right side consisted of a long thin stroke that made the structure weak, it needed to more balanced.
 [19] I started by adding trying to balance the structure that I already had.
 [20] I enjoyed this looping structure but it was too soft and lacked the tension between round and angular shapes.
 [21] The final design features an overlapping structure with big curves and contrasting straight parts.

SEPTEMBER

SEPTEMBER



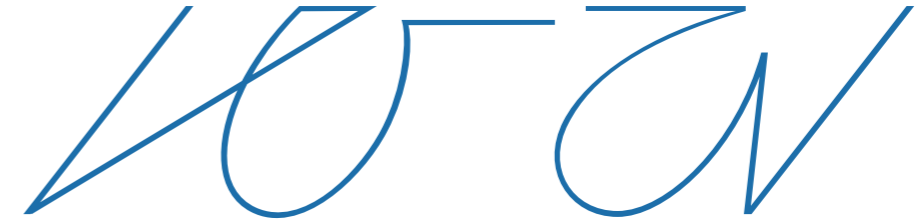
[22]



[23]



[24]



[25]

NOVEMBER

NOVEMBER

[22] In this C the angle was not pronounced enough and it lacked a swash. I tried many iterations to introduce a swash but I found my attempts forced. I also felt that not every letter needed to be complicated and some more simple and conventional structures could help the rhythm of the typeface.

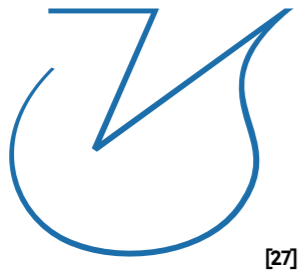
[23] This last version is the structure that I feel most comfortable with. Although it lacks a swash and the presence of contrast of angular and round shapes, the curve has a lot of energy.

[24] The W is another structure that I have had to do a lot of exploring to find a solution that fits my system. It has been hard to introduce big curves or a swashed element in a way that makes sense in terms of gesture and art direction.

[25] After trying out lots of possibilities, the structure I have gone with more resembles a lower case structure, as this allowed me to have a curved element without forcing it into the design.

SEPTEMBER

SEPTEMBER



NOVEMBER

NOVEMBER

[26] This Y fits the system in the sense that it had a large curve mixed with more angular shapes and an element that reached out. However, I was not happy with the design, it had a pretty aggressive feel.

[27] As for solving other issues, I sketched a lot of and tried many different digital iterations until I found something that I feel works with the system and helps add to the overall design.

[28] I liked the structure of this F but as it flows only to the right it breaks the rhythm. I needed something on the right to balance it out.

[29] The final F design very much stems from the structure of the P. Although I was avoiding having this copy-paste structures, I think it's okay for certain glyphs.

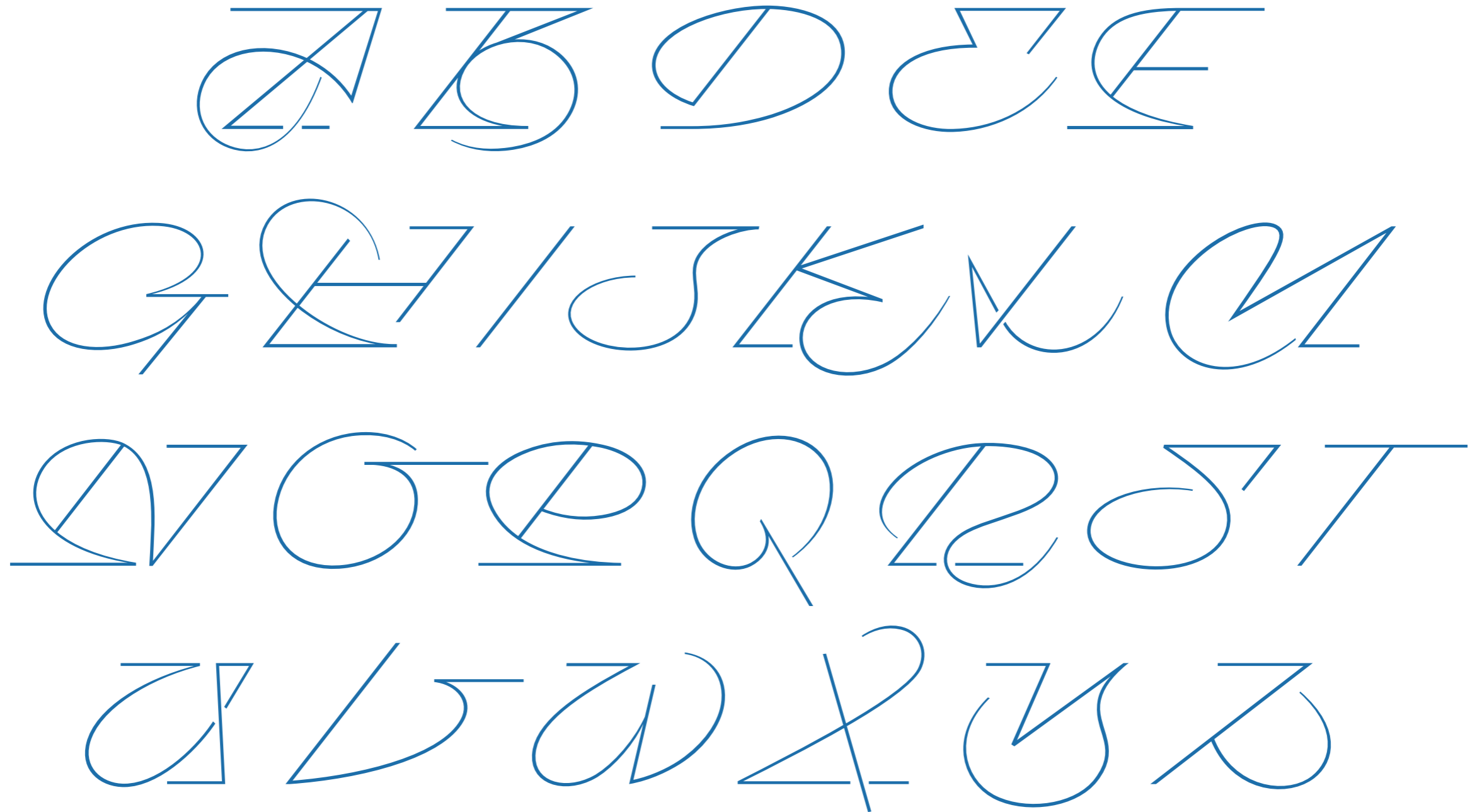
THE RESULT

Overall, I have enjoyed the process of drawing these capitals. I liked the process of exploring letter shapes, however my lettering approach to type design means that the design process was less systematic. Most of the time I spent exploring possible directions was based on how individual structures fit into the system rather than changing the treatment of letters.

I did have a strong creative direction and certain features in the system that I was creating. The design was rooted in having big curves that mirrored hand gestures contrasting with more angular strokes, and these parameters are arguably vague. As I have been trying to 'reinvent' some structures, I have at times felt a bit lost on how to draw certain glyphs and not felt like the system was strong enough for me to clearly see what the following glyphs should look like. As there was still a lot of freedom to invent, a fair amount of variety exists between glyphs. I don't feel completely satisfied with the result of every glyph.

To create a system, I toned down a lot of the overlapping aspects of the design. This had initially been a key design feature and although I did focus on this, the overlapping only occurs in specific situations, whereas I would have liked to have created a system where it is really at the heart of the typeface. In some situations, I have succeeded in creating letters that make an image and are balanced and have the feeling that I was aiming for, but some letter combinations don't work as well. So, in some ways makes me feel like I haven't achieved what I set out to do.



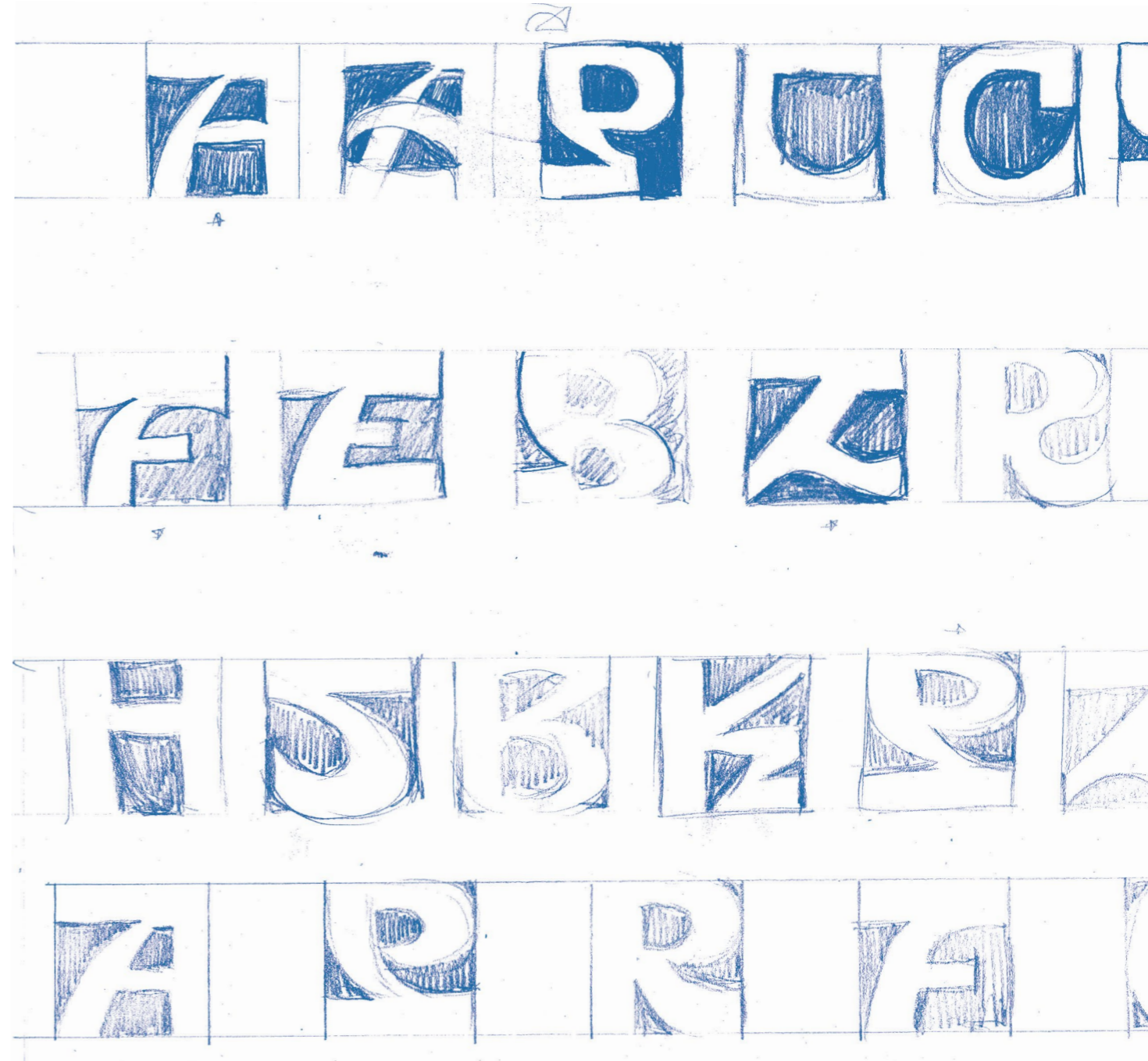


EXPANDING THE DISPLAY

At the beginning of this project I had always imagined including multiple weights in my design space. I didn't know exactly how I would create a bold for the swashed capitals I had drawn. I started to try some explorations to look into weight.

First I added weight to the monolinear structures. This was an obvious option to try, but it felt very expected and didn't seem to bring anything to the design.

I sketched some ideas and tried to imagine how I could create a bold design. Starting with the shapes that I had for the light I altered the structures and tried to fill in as much white space as a way to optimise the black. This was an interesting exercise as it showed how I could develop a bold weight by taking the light and altering the structure.



From these sketches I explored how other typefaces use unconventional ways to add weight. I looked at the typefaces Boogy Brut and Swear by Ohno. Both of these typefaces have styles that look at weight in an interesting way that don't follow a usual contrast model.

Boogy Brut has various styles that explore weight in a very unusual way, the styles look pretty different but feel in some way unified.

Figure 14.
Boogy Brut, Released in 2020.
White Wild, Black Wild, Poster Black Wild, Poster
White Wild.

James Edmondson's Swear includes a crazy reverse contrast italic style. It's very expressive and creates some very interesting shapes. I felt that looking exploring how to add weight in a less conventional could continue my shape research and bring something more to the design.

Figure 15.
Swear Banner Black Cilati by OH no Type Company,
Released in 2020

I tried to experiment with a very wide nib. I used the tool and tried to optimise the structures I had in the light weight to work with this tool. In most cases, the structures changed, but I tried to keep an essence of what I had drawn for the light weight. The results were interesting but it felt like it was from a different world to the light weight.

Another experiment that I did was to fill in the swashes. So instead of creating a big counter shapes, they were a black shape. Again, there were interesting parts to this but it felt like something very different to the light weight swashed capitals.

JAN BELLETJ EN

RENTS CHANTJ

STAYLOFTS OS

FORM RENTGEBOT IS

HRB FABIAN ISLE

BE HUY RACTS

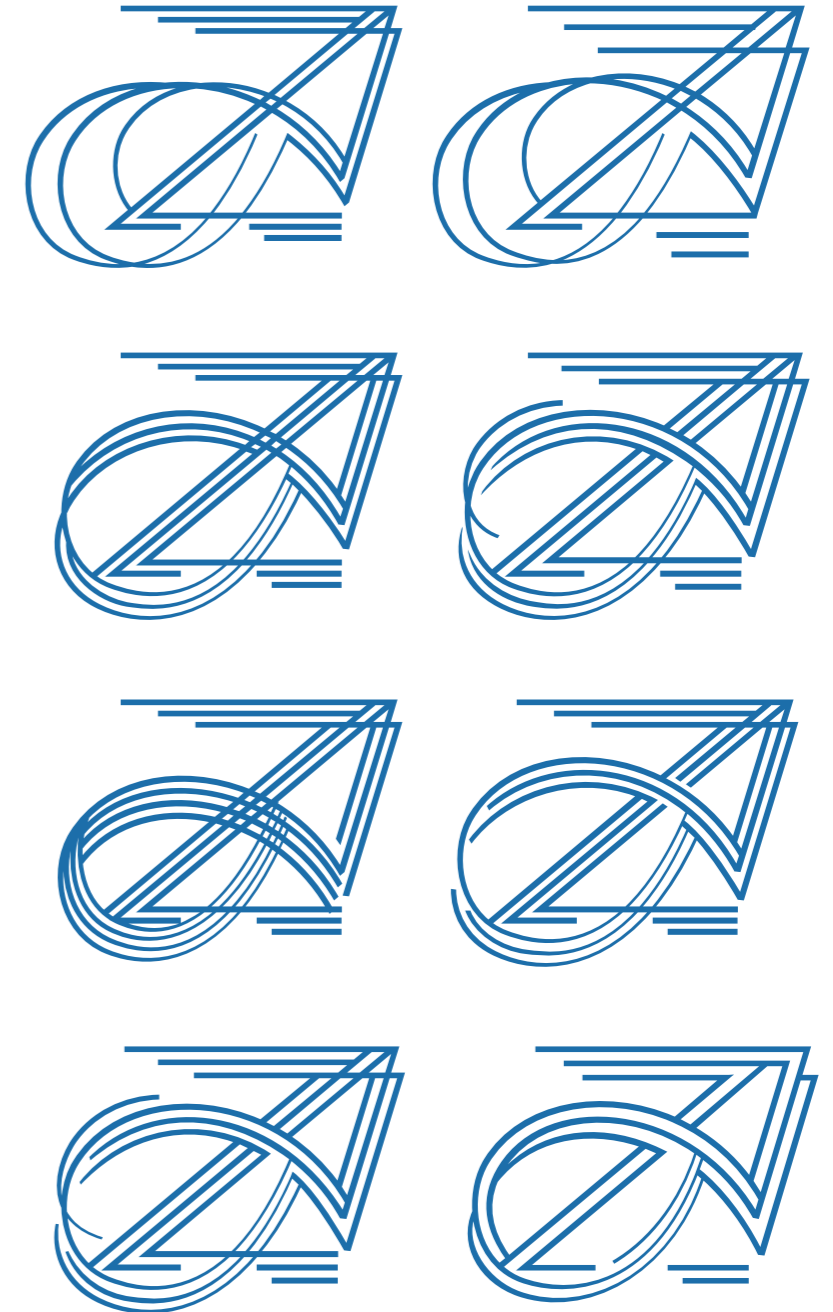
In August, the printer jammed while I was printing a proof. The print created a sort of glitch inline effect. I had thought that it was interesting at the time, so I kept it. I came back to this during this period of exploration around weight because in a way having multiple lines added weight to the design.

The printer glitch reminded me of the calligraphy not too dissimilar to the sources that I had been referencing at the start of this project. In a way, the multiple lines complicated the shapes in a way that felt like it drew parallels with the complicated loops of 16th century Dutch calligraphy.

After a trial to test the idea I decided that this multi-line style would be the way to explore weight for these display capitals. It took a few different versions to dial down the amount of white space between the strokes and how to treat the curves. I didn't want this style to feel like I had just copy pasted multiple outlines. I wanted the strokes to make new and interesting shapes.



Figure 16.
Alphabet of Engraved Flemish capitals.
Cornelis Boissens, *Calligraphie*, Claude Mediavilla.



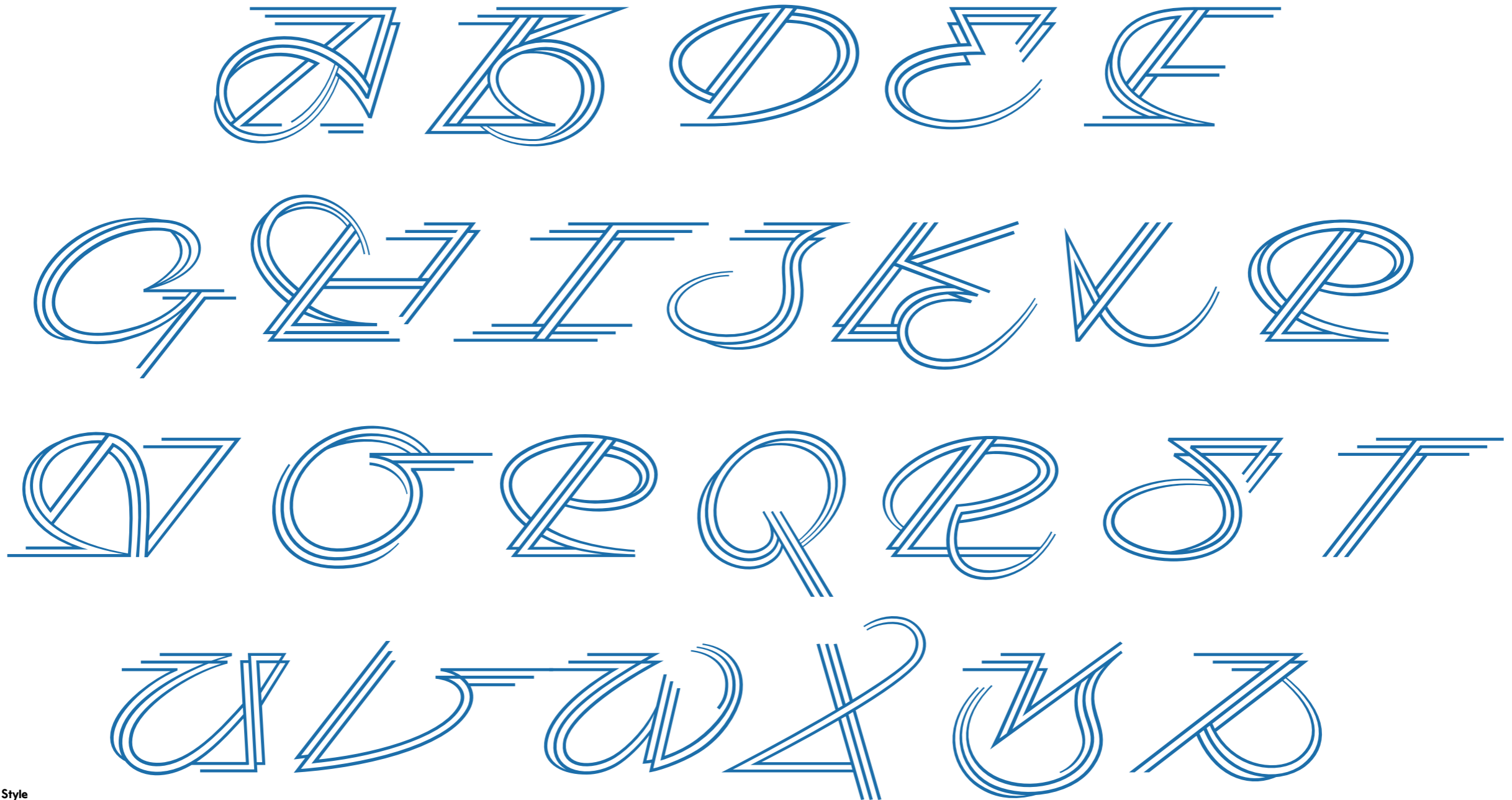
Exploring different ways to manage the system for the multi-line style.

The system that I decided was working best was one in which the ductus followed the gesture or the overall letter shape. To avoid overlapping strokes there is fragmentation in parts, but for the most part, if the stroke breaks it continues where you would expect it to. I have tried to mirror how you would expect the weight to be distributed, so there are fewer strokes in the parts of the letter that are conventionally thinner.

Managing completely round shapes, such as the O, was a challenge to work the curves in a way that made sense in terms of the system, but didn't look like multiple repeating shapes.

As in the light weight of this style, there is a horizontal stress at the top of a lot of the letter shapes. Here it has been used to create some connections between letters, although these are separate glyphs the way they link gives a ligature like feeling.





Multi-line Display Style

**THE
DISPLAY
LOWERCASE**

Boogy Brut Poster

Apples Bananas Draw

Marian 1554 Italic

Apples Bananas Draw

Rapidissima Regular

Apples Bananas Draw

Canto Light Italic

Apples Bananas Draw

Helvetica Neue Thin

Apples Bananas Draw

Helvetica Neue Thin Italic

Apples Bananas Draw

Ping Extra Light

Apples Bananas Draw

Futura PT Light

Apples Bananas Draw

Futura PT Light Oblique

Apples Bananas Draw

TESTING WITH EXISTING FONTS

When I was first developing the display capitals, I paired some early drawings of the capitals with some existing typefaces to research what the lower case might look like. From this experiment, there were two convincing directions. A lower case that contrasted the style of the upper case in the form of a geometric sans serif, or a fast calligraphic italic that is more harmonious with the style of the upper case. I liked the idea of having contrasting styles but I felt that I would prefer to draw a lower case that matched the style of the upper case and develop a sans for text.

This is similar to what I imagined the lower case to look like when I was first developing the capitals. I thought that something with a reference to the speed of the writing tool made sense to accompany the upper case design.

Apples

Paired with Rapidissima Regular, 70 pt

I was encouraged to try out some sans serif and I was surprised at how having contrasting designs worked. Although I was convinced by using these contrasting styles together, I felt that it made more sense to me to have them as separate styles in the same family that could be used in layouts together, rather than the lower case to accompany my capitals.

Apples

Paired with Futura PT Light, 70 pt

The alphabet in its complete form, with the clockwise letters in red.

a b c d e f g h
 i j k l m n o p
 q r s s t t t u v
 w x y α Z or 3
 nun. run
 mummy

Joining up the letters. The groups in red join naturally to the groups in black and also to the ascender group, using diagonal joining strokes.

a c d e h i k l m
 n u z
 e f i j m n o p r s
 t u v w x y z
 ae af ai aj am an
 ao ap ar as at au
 av aw ax ay α az
 ab ah ak al

CURSIVE HANDWRITING

After establishing that I would have a cursive lowercase for my display and draw a sans serif for text, I began to explore how to draw the lowercase. I came across Tom Gourdie's handwriting manual, which was a British book aimed to instil an importance of good handwriting in adults as well as children. I thought that it could be interesting to play with this simple cursive handwriting style to accompany my capitals. I felt like it made sense to start with a more calm base for the lower case and then introduce expression into the design.

Figure 17.
The Ladybird Book of Handwriting, Gourdie, Tom, 1968.

on uu bh bud buddie
 italy preoccupied learning bearily
 judge | pack my ca case w w wisdom
 nope drunk nope bpd bpd
 first mange mon que bqhynuit
 uy adggoecvwfjsxz bunch of
 oney cooked tane befoe sonser
 nam hamburrgefontsiu ride
 a ha a a hamburrgefont he pave
 ive you a a q a quick b brown fox
 mps over the lazy dog sphinx of
 ack judge my vov pack

I experimented with the handwriting source and played with speed and the steepness of the angle. For this exercise, I just used a pencil. As my capitals had taken a monolinear low contrast form this tool made sense.

I also tried to draw letters with a flat top as a lot of my capitals have this horizontal stress at the top of the letter.

abcde fghij

klmnopqr

stuvwxy

June, 2023

abcde fghij

klmnopqr

stuvwxyz

November, 2023

I decided that having a more calm lower case without the addition of swashes was a nice direction to take. Instead I introduced expression through speed.

unsupported
 aggregations
 temperature
 bacteriolog

I did some experiments to see if I could add some swashes to the lower case that I had drawn. For this, I printed out my design and simply drew over what I already had.

Personalising
 Functionalit
 Decorative
 Parsimonious

Pickled

Gupping

Auditor

THE RESULT

I was quite happy with how the capitals and lower case worked together. In this project I was very much focused on creating a set of upper cases that could work in an all caps setting to create words that had a lettering like image. This process of manipulating the structures of the capitals was quite slow, I drew a lot of different structures that often simply didn't work and so it felt at times like I wasn't moving forward. Designing these lower case on the other hand felt efficient, the system was obvious and once I had decided on the design the production was relatively simple.

DRAWING THE TEXT

GEOMETRIC DIRECTION

After pairing my display caps sketches with some existing typefaces I saw the appeal of having styles that contrasted each other. The idea of including a sans in my family was to be the stylistic opposite of the swash capitals that I had drawn. The display italic is rooted in a culture of writing, it has been guided by the gesture of the hand which has resulted in a typeface that feels excessive. The opposite to this suggests a geometric sans that focused on functionality and embodies a brutalist aesthetic, that could be used for running text in a layout with the display style I was working on.

Futura is an obvious example of typeface like this, so my initial sketches were with this in mind. I focused on building letter shapes based purely on geometric shapes.

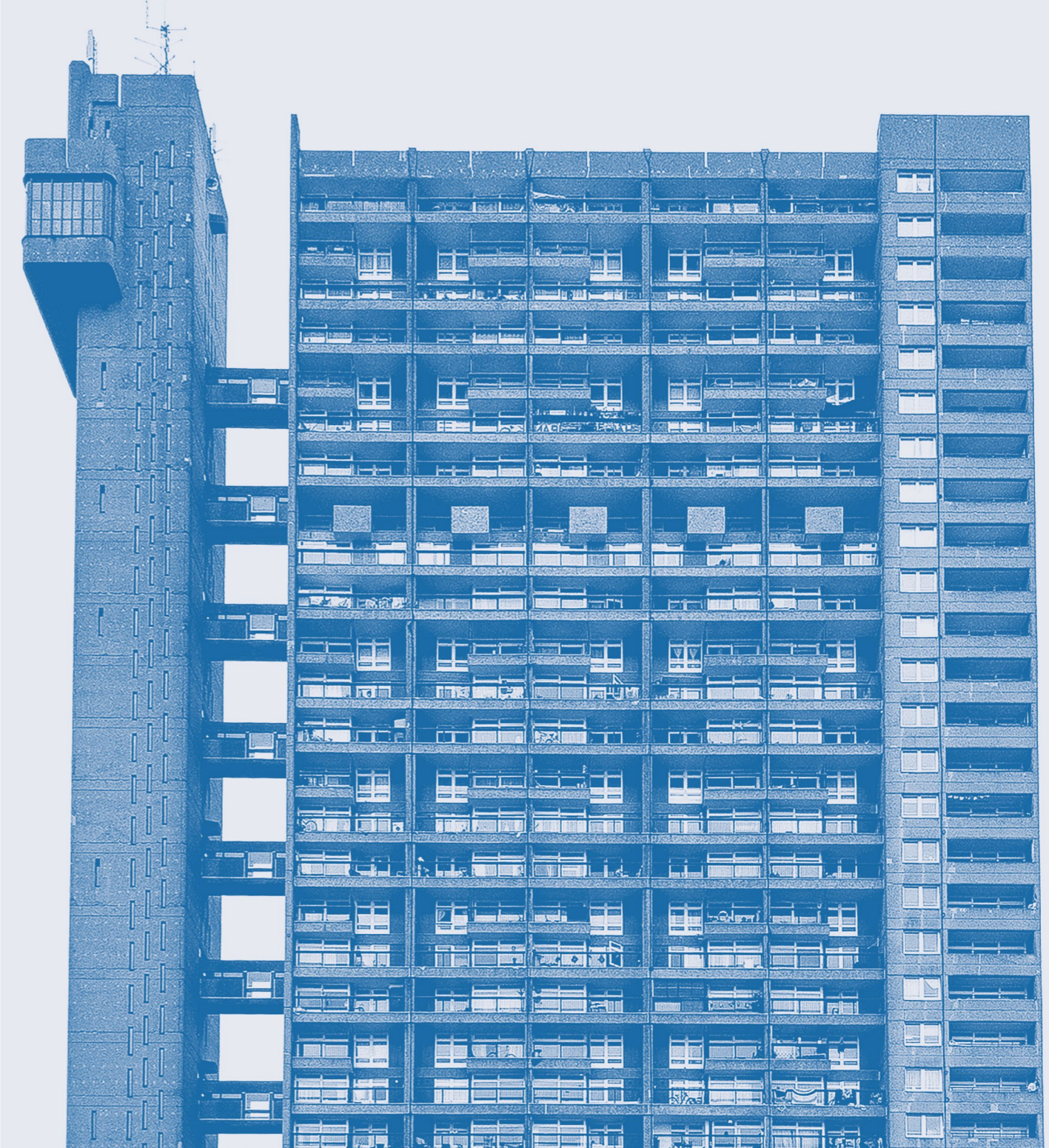




Figure 18.
Page from first complete specimen of Futura

The first sans that I drew was very much just built of modular geometric parts, and although this seemed to be working when paired with the display italic I was struggling with making the design feel my own.

a b d e f g
h i l m n o p
q r s t u v

First Sans Drawing
May, 2023

Step 10.

Smile a little
as you go along

Step 11.

m i h u o a n v l t
 m i h u o a n v l t
 m n o a P R V
 m n o a P R V

Step 12.

God's in His Heaven
All's right with the world

HANDWRITING EXPLORATIONS

After discovering some 20th century writing manuals I became interested in this sans handwriting style and felt that using this as a reference would allow me to draw a sans that had more personality. I also liked how it fitted with the project as I already had a display style that was rooted in a culture of writing.

The manuals were designed to be used to teach school children handwriting and there are some interesting quirks in the model, mostly due to the inexperience of the author. Some of these features that I identified in the source included the irregularity of the bowls that are flatter on the bottom connection to the stem than the top where the connection is deeper and curve more round. The model also included a cursive structure of the 'e' and small tail on the ascender of the 'y' and 'g', low 'i' dot.

Figure 19.
1919, S. A. Golds' A Guide
to the Teaching of Manu-
script Writing.

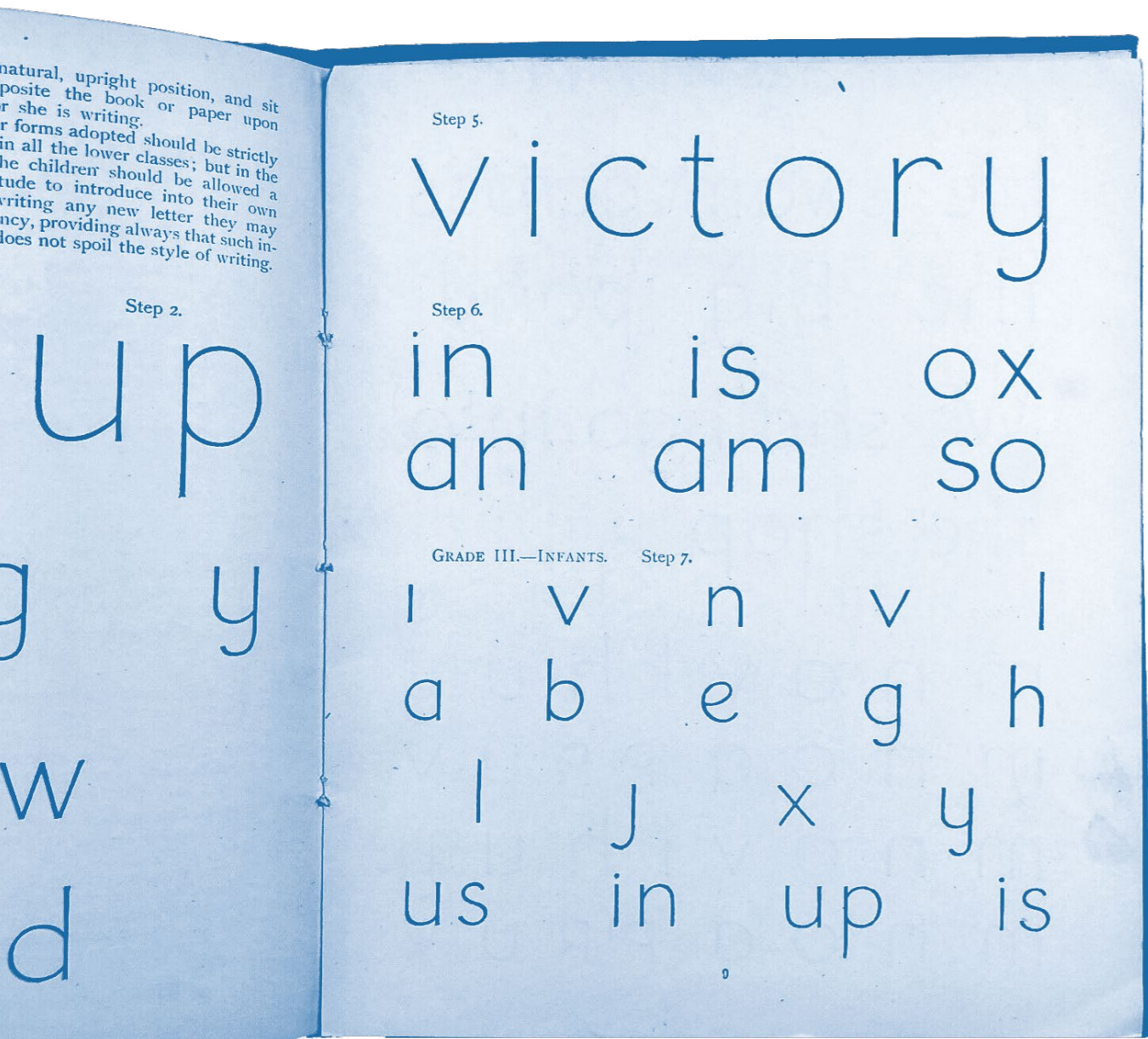


Figure 20.
S. A. Golds' A Guide to the Teaching of Manuscript
Writing, 1919.



hamburgerfontsi

[30]

hamburgerfontsi

[31]

[31] While both writing and speech are useful in conveying messages writing differs in also being a reliable form of information storage and transfer. Writing systems require shared understanding between writers and readers of the meaning behind the sets of characters that make up a script. Without a mutual understanding of the meanings behind both writing and reading like literacy reading comprehension transliteration and translation a writing system can be rendered useless.

[30] While both writing and speech are useful in conveying messages writing differs in also being a reliable form of information storage and transfer. Writing systems require shared understanding between writers and readers of the meaning behind the sets of characters that make up a script. Without a mutual understanding of the meanings behind both writing and reading via things like literacy reading comprehension transliteration and translation a writing system can be rendered useless.

[30] Handwriting inspired sans

[31] Geometric design

Although the handwriting design allowed me to feel like I was drawing a sans that I could make my own and explore something that felt new, its position in the family made less sense. The features that I had identified in the handwriting overall made the design less efficient. I had tried to emphasise the small quirks that the manuals featured but in text these became distracting. And when paired next to the display capitals the tension created by having two distinct styles was lost, as the handwriting inspired sans did not offer this stark contrast. For these reasons I decided to leave the sans handwriting explorations and return to focus on a geometric design.




ALTERNATIVE STRUCTURES

Although I saw the benefit of having a simple geometric design, I was still a bit uncomfortable in knowing how to give the design value without it simply being a companion for the display. I decided to explore some geometric experiments to see if I could find some structures that were very geometric ensuring that the styles were still contrasting but giving the text some flavour.



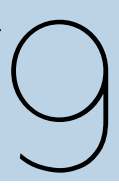
For these sketches I looked at some calligraphic models for some alternative Roman structures and from these references tried to draw some very geometric sans alternatives. The models I looked at were Onciale, Gothique Batarde, Ronde and Caroline.

Figure 21.
Various calligraphy models.
Images from the book *Calligraphie*, Mediavilla, C,
1994.



- [32] Onciale
- [33] Gothique Batarde
- [34] Ronde
- [35] La Caroline

hamburger 

[36]

  hamburger 


[37]

ham bour rger

[38]

hamburger 

[39]

ham burger

[40]

ham burger

[41]

However, like my sans handwriting experiments the introduction of more 'flavour' into the design diluted the value of the sans in this project. My initial motivations to include a sans in this family was to bring in a completely contrasting style, and the most efficient way to do this was with a geometric design.

I have struggled with feeling that I have ownership of the design in the sense that it I am not just drawing a 'less good Futura'. But through trying out some different directions and using the sans with the display I could see that the design best suited to this project was a simple geometric sans.

[36] An 'e' structure inspired by the Gothique Batarde construction.

[37] Taking Ronde structures and making them geometric

[38] Round shoulders inspired by Onciale structure

[39] This 'g' is a take on the structure seen in La Caroline model but made with geometric shapes.

[40] Onciale inspired 'a' structure

[41] Trying to make the Onciale structure more geometric.

A B C D E F G H I J
 K L M N O P Q R S
 T U V W X Y Z
 a b c d e f g h i j k l m
 n o p q r s t u v w x y z

A B C D E F G H I J
K L M N O P Q R S
T U V W X Y Z
a b c d e f g h i j k l m
n o p q r s t u v w x y z

hamburger

12° Slant

Writing is a cognitive and social activity involving *hamburger* and physical processes.

hamburger

20° Degrees Slant

Writing is a cognitive and social activity involving *hamburger* and physical processes.

hamburger

30° Degrees Slant

Writing is a cognitive and social activity involving *hamburger* and physical processes.

OBLIQUE

For the text italic I drew an oblique design and explored the steepness of the slant. I initially started with a fairly calm 12° angle but the contrast between this and the upright was not obvious enough in text. I next drew an italic with a 20° slant. This was working better, it was standing out from the upright text.

Drawing this 20° italic also opened up the idea of having a more extreme italic angle, as I have such a slanted angle in the display style. I tried out a pretty extreme 30° italic angle. I enjoyed the first draft of this, having such a steep angle opened the opportunity for the design to be adapted in imaginative ways to suit the slant.

However, I decided to go with the more conservative 20° for my italic as I was more comfortable with how it looked in text.

A B C D E F G H I J

K L M N O P Q R S

T U V W X Y Z

a b c d e f g h i j k l m

n o p q r s t u v w x y z

A B C D E F G H I J

K L M N O P Q R S

T U V W X Y Z

a b c d e f g h i j k l m

n o p q r s t u v w x y z

FRIDAY 21ST APRIL

GREENWORKS



MIXING THE STYLES

I was encouraged to start to use my typefaces in layout situations. I had initially had discussions about how my project would work well in a branding situation. I started to make some mock layouts for a record company including album covers and event posters.

Through using the styles together I started to see the value of mixing the sans and display. Although I designed the sans for text there was always an idea of mixing the two styles together. Both styles have the same vertical metrics and the light weight sans matches the weight of the display.

I created a master that includes the sans upper case and the display capitals so that they can be used easily together. I slightly adjust the weight of the sans serif, as due to the display caps having some contrast the sans looked a bit heavy when placed side by side. I set up a mixed master which has the sans upper case as the lower case, so that it is easy to swap the glyphs and see what works best for a particular situation. I did think about having a more automated system, such as having the sans capitals as alternates that appeared every 2nd or 3rd glyph. But I decided that it is more useful to have a system where the individual has more control and can easily try out and choose exactly how the styles are mixed.

THE QUICK

BROWN FOX

JUMPS OVER

THE LAZY DOG

CONCLUSION



Display Italic Hairline



Display Mix



Display Multi line



Sans Hairline



Sans Regular



Sans Bold



Sans Hairline Light



Sans Italic Regular



Sans Italic Bold

DESIGN SPACE

My overall design space consists of the display italic, which includes the swashed capitals and a cursive lowercase. I also have a master that includes the swashed capitals and the sans upper case and there is a take on a 'bold' weight for the swashed capitals in the multi line style. For the text I have a geometric sans both upright and oblique in light, regular and bold.

I do feel like I would have liked to have pushed the design of the display italic more as I feel that there are a few structures that I compromised with. I tried to draw alternatives and find solutions for glyphs that I wasn't satisfied with it, however sometimes I couldn't find an alternative that was an improvement to replace the current design. I also would have liked to have been able to create a system that has more overlap.

I do have some reservations about how the design of the text is very reminiscent of Futura. It is important to me to create something that another existing typeface doesn't already offer. In terms of my sans, it has real value when mixing the styles and alternating letters between the display and text in the same word. I am less confident in defending its originality as a typeface in itself. However, the motivations behind drawing the sans and its value lie very much within the context of the family.

In the future I would of course like to have a more complete character set for all the styles. I would also like to explore more ways to have a black weight in for the display styles and include the lower case in these explorations.

WHAT I HAVE LEARNT

I have enjoyed creating these two contrasting styles and I feel that it has been a really good project in terms of learning - I have learnt the process of designing a crazy display typeface which has explored some interesting shapes as well as a more classic text typeface.

As well as learning hands on about the process of designing a typeface I feel that I have also learnt lots about how to design a project. Giving yourself constraints to guide exploration is actually a very good way to focus a project. My project centred around an initial feeling I got from some artwork, from which I created a language of form where I was free to search for shapes. I might not have got so lost and felt that I had exhausted all ideas had I constrained myself more from the outset. Some constraints that would have helped this project could have stemmed from a problem that I wanted to solve or limits on what tools I could have used. I think this could have also helped me to expand the family. If I were to set out to do this project again I would have done things very differently, this is actually comforting as it shows how much I have learnt. I have learnt how to simply try ideas out, I think that exploring an idea by just doing it is the best way to see if something works.

Doing graphic design with my typeface as I was developing it has been a really good exercise that feeds into the type design process. Often the typefaces that I find most interesting to draw are not the most usable designs, so even though it feels like a change of pace to go from type design to graphic design it's useful to have that feedback to understand how the design can be used.

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COLOPHON

Printed: Ésad Amiens, February 2024

Typeface: Sper text and display

Paper: Clairefontaine 270g Bleu Roi
and DCP 100g recycled

Sper is the EsadType graduation project of Lois Hinshelwood. Born from an interest in gesture and curiosity with exploring the structure of Latin letterforms. The family grew into something that explores contrasting styles including a fast and expressive display style and a rationalised geometric sans. These two typefaces are designed to be used together in a number of ways.