

EsadType 2024–26

An informal editorial family for  
Latin and Tamil, drawn from  
*expressive hand-lettering* and  
*unconventional writing tools.*

by  
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*École supérieure d'art  
et de design d'Amiens*

**Tae • La**

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**Part I**

**Context**



# Background & Motivation

I am a type and graphic designer from Chennai, India. I like designing systems, including typefaces, publications, identities, and interfaces. I also enjoy exploring printing processes and coding in my free time. My interest in design started with my interest in books and publishing. I used to read a lot as a kid, and have wanted to be a writer since then, but somewhere along the way I got distracted by the design of the books I was reading. I completed my undergraduate studies in communication design in 2021, and afterwards, started working as a type designer with Ek Type, a Mumbai-based type foundry with a focus on multi-script families.

Over my three years of experience at the foundry, I worked primarily on designing typefaces, as well as lettering and logotypes, in the Tamil script. I think this experience gave me a good foundation in Tamil type design, so I wanted to build a similar foundation with the Latin script as well. In a professional setting, the kinds of projects I got to work on were limited by the goals of my team, and the requirements of clients and the market. I applied to Esad-Type, seeking an opportunity to return to an academic setting and explore something fun and experimental. I noticed a pattern among students at type design masters courses, wherein European and North American students tend to work on form-based explorations, whereas many students from India or countries in Africa feel the need to ground their projects in a more function-forward brief. Since most of the projects I got to work on as a professional were 'functional' typefaces, I wanted to attempt something that was purely a form-based exercise.

→ As a child, sitting on a rock at our farm and writing a story.



Through the last few years, I have been able to observe my own strengths and weaknesses. I am good at picking up and using digital tools, but I struggle with my hand skills. I do enjoy working with my hands on things like printmaking, but I've usually found drawing, lettering or calligraphy frustrating, as I struggle to achieve the results I'm envisioning. I also struggle with creating a vast number of options for a given brief, and make design decisions based on rationality and instinct rather than extensive exploration. A few months before arriving at EsadType, I participated in a short calligraphy workshop that was more explorative in nature. I went into it without any end result in mind, and I actually enjoyed it. I want to get better at this kind of explorative approach, and improve my drawing ability, so that they can be additional skills I can employ in type design projects.

I am also known among my friends and family to be stoic, steady and measured, but I wanted to challenge myself to create something that goes against my nature, something that feels expressive and fast.



← My explorations from a short calligraphy workshop in 2024 at EkType, Mumbai with Dr. Santosh Kshirsagar.

→ Working on my laptop during my undergraduate studies at TIDES, Coimbatore in 2020.



→ Operating an FAG standard press while volunteering at TYPA Centre, Tartu, Estonia, in June 2025.



## Central Questions

Coming into my personal project, my aim was to design a multi-script type family for Latin and Tamil that included a combination of display and text styles, intended for editorial use. I wanted to develop visually cohesive styles through an extensive exploration of tools, where the essence of the style would be defined by physical tools, while digital tools would help with exaggeration and extrapolation, but also with refinement and iteration. The display styles would try to find the right balance between the abstraction and rhythm created by the tool, while the text styles would prioritise texture while retaining more subtle touches of the tool. I hoped to then showcase the family in use through designing a sample of an experimental bilingual print publication.

Some questions I started my research process with included:

- How can I achieve a wide variety of effects using the same tool?
- How does the same tool behave when applied to different scripts and their characteristic features?
- Can different scripts in a multi-script family be designed in parallel such that they influence each other while also retaining their own roots?
- How does the typographic history of a script affect the styles in which it is popularly represented?
- How can we innovate and add to the visual culture of a script?

To put it in one line, my subject of interest was the expression of materiality in digital type. I wanted to explore the physical materials used to initially create type, be it the tools they are drawn with, the materials they are made out of, or the textures they are represented on, and how they leave traces of their identity in the digital end product of a typeface. I also wanted to explore what the notion of materiality means in the digital context, where it is essentially decoupled from any physical material.



# Visual Context



↑ Tamil book covers with hand-drawn lettering. Erin McLaughlin, Flickr

Establishing a graphic context for the project was helpful in visualising the potential end result from the beginning, and grounding my explorations in a general ethos.

Tamil book covers and magazines in the 1960s–80s used a lot of hand-drawn elements, including expressive lettering and illustrations, put together using techniques like paste-up composition. I really enjoyed the creativity and expression found in the graphic design of this era, as it felt very idiomatic to the Indian and Tamil context. With the advent of digital media in the 1990s and 2000s, the design of these magazines became a lot more globalised and less interesting, in my opinion.

Still, a lot of early, pre-Unicode digital typefaces in Tamil carried over this essence, and drew a lot of inspiration from hand-drawn lettering. They came in large catalogues, that reminded me of photo-type catalogues from the 1960s–80s. I wanted to try designing something that went back to this tradition of playfulness and expressivity in both the type design and graphic design.

Once I had this grounding, I was able to gather a broader pool of visual references from various sources and mediums. Through closely examining them, I articulated what exactly I found interesting about them, and how they could be relevant to my project.

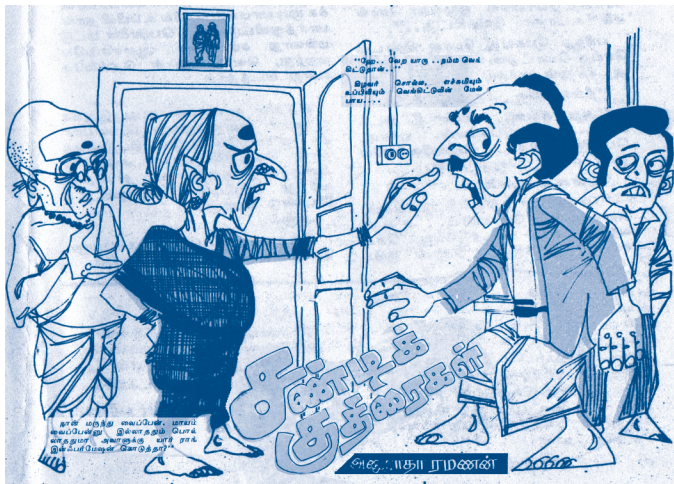


← Hand-drawn titles in old Tamil periodicals. Personal collection

↑ Hand-drawn titles in old Tamil periodicals. Maida Gondu, Flickr



← Layouts from old Tamil periodicals, date unknown. Erin McLaughlin and Maida Gonda, Flickr.



↘ Layouts from modern Tamil periodicals, between 2002–26 Personal collection



→ Pre-Unicode digital Tamil font catalogue. Anu Information Technologies Pvt. Ltd.

மறுபிறவி  
சிம்மாசனம்  
அரங்கேற்றம்  
பூம்புகார்  
அழைப்பிரிவு  
திருமணம்  
செஞ்சொடை  
முத்திரை  
வணக்கம்  
நாட்டியாட்சி  
மகாவிபரம்  
புறக்கொடை  
குங்குமம்  
அழைக்கப்படு  
நகைச்சுவை  
மகாபுரம்  
விவேகம்  
விமர்சனம்  
மாளிகை  
கதிரவன்  
காவிதாசன்  
இயற்கை  
கற்பனை  
சிவப்புகர்  
தொடர்நகை  
அழைப்புகள்  
மகாபுரம்  
பாறியார்

- 1. Brama
- 2. Pallavar
- 3. Sigaram
- 4. Thaaragai
- 5. Amudam
- 6. Eswar
- 7. Thendral
- 8. Thamizhagam
- 9. Naanal
- 10. Thillai
- 11. Valram
- 12. Thurigai
- 13. Maragadam
- 14. Paaval
- 15. Keeran
- 16. Muthirai
- 17. Mullai
- 18. Bharani
- 19. Bharani Medium
- 20. Bharani Bold
- 21. Adithyan
- 22. Adithyan Medium
- 23. Adithyan Bold
- 24. Alaipayude
- 25. Amaravathi
- 26. Anitha
- 27. Aravind
- 28. Brama Brush
- 29. Brinda

ஸ்வண்ணமுக்கி  
கருவீர்  
அப்துல்கலாம்  
இதழ்  
சிற்பம்  
நகைச்சுவை  
அழைப்புகள்  
படகோட்டி  
சகோதரி  
வணையாபதி  
மயலாடல்  
கவர்ஷா  
பகவத்குமார்  
இந்தியன்  
வேட்டை  
நாயன்மார்கள்  
வசந்தகாலம்  
இதழ்க்கள்  
பஞ்சாங்கம்  
அன்பு  
சூரியோதி  
புறப்புகள்  
குந்தாணி  
சூரியோதி  
சுந்தரி  
உபதேசம்  
புதுபுது  
கண்டலகசி

- 172. Pudukottai
- 173. Girish
- 174. Trichy
- 175. Kapilan
- 176. Vellore
- 177. Kowsalya
- 178. Pavithra
- 179. Madurai
- 180. Punitha
- 181. Rasika
- 182. Namakal
- 183. Ashoka
- 184. Varunavi
- 185. Atthi
- 186. Baasha
- 187. Maaran
- 188. Thirunelveli
- 189. ThirunelveliBold
- 190. Narendran
- 191. Viroopa
- 192. Jeevitha
- 193. Kadhiravan
- 194. Sivakami
- 195. Karikalan
- 196. Keshav
- 197. Tanjavur
- 198. Kuzhandhai
- 199. Sarala
- 200. Suguna

→ Photo-Lettering's One Line Manual of Styles, 1970s. Letterform Archive





# Emergent Principles

Three common principles stood out to me across all of my references, each a different, intentional way of utilising the tool so as to imprint its personality onto the letterforms.

## Play

The first is the notion of play, by which I mean a non-standard, unexpected, or 'playful' utilisation of the tool while drawing a stroke, thus imparting to the letterform an organic expression of the tool, as opposed to a construction where the hand of the tool is hidden. This phenomena of play can be identified through further sub-phenomena.

There is the aspect of casualness, where there is relaxed rather than rigid construction, which is not bothered with being properly placed or aligned, or perfectly drawn.



← Lettering piece by Gen Ramirez. *Gen Ramirez, Instagram*

↑ Hand-painted street lettering in Tamil. *Tamil Type Theddal*

There is the aspect of brokenness, where strokes don't flow perfectly into one another and show their edges, or where the strokes themselves are broken up in unusual ways, creating unique structures.

# Resist



↑ Paroli typeface by Elena Schneider. *Adobe Fonts*

↑ Hand-painted street signage in Tamil. *Personal collection*

There is also the aspect of twisting or turning the tool while drawing the stroke, which leaves an unmistakable fingerprint of the tool unlike a more straight or steady application.



↑ Lettering piece by Gen Ramirez. *Gen Ramirez, Instagram*

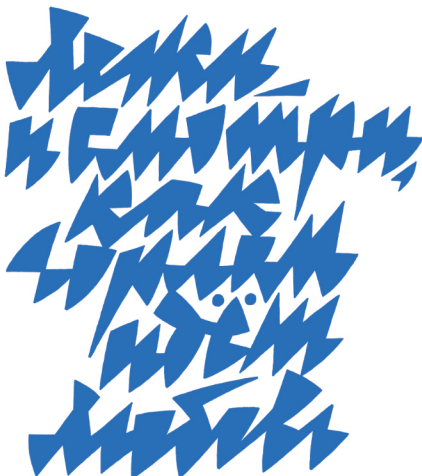


↑ Lettering from an ad in an old Tamil periodical. *Personal collection*

### Speed

The second is the notion of speed. Similar to play, when constructing letterforms at speed, we are less concerned with a proper or 'invisible' construction, so the tool is afforded more opportunities to shine through. The sub-phenomena I observed that are usually signs of speed, are:

—Angularity, where the forms tend to be sharper rather than rounder;

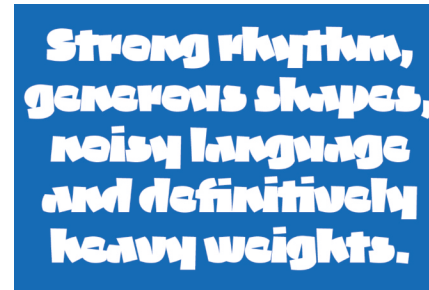


*el portuguès són variants regionals d'una mateixa llengua*

↑ Karol Sans typeface by Daniel Sabino. *Adobe Fonts*

← Cyrillic lettering piece by Elena Novoselova. *ncwvillagetype.com*

—Simplification, where the structure of the letterforms are simplified to increase efficiency;



↑ Grenat typeface by Theo Guillard. *Future Fonts*

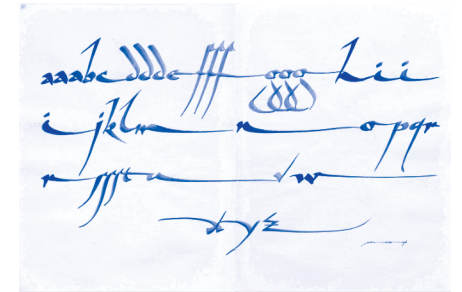


↑ A lettering piece of mine from 2022.

—Unevenness, where the proportions of the letterforms are more uneven due to the varying speeds at which different strokes and structures can be drawn;



↑ Lettering from a Tamil book cover. *Erin McLaughlin, Flickr*

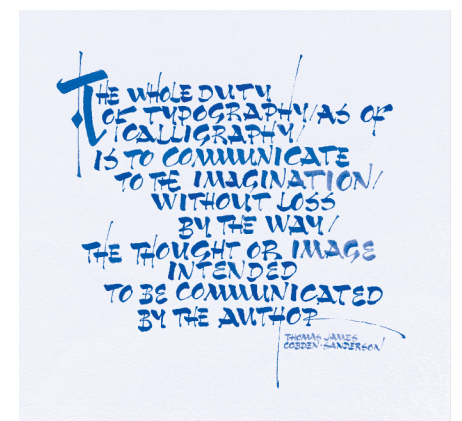


→ Calligraphy by Arthur Baker. *Letterform Archive*

—Gestures, where strokes often extend or join each other in the direction of the drawing, which is another unmistakable signature of the tool and the hand of the artist;



↑ Calligraphy by Malo Heffreingue. *malohff.fr*



→ Calligraphy by Alan Blackman. *Letterform Archive*

—Slant, where the letterforms lean towards the direction of writing;

15. Slope.

*bpdqfphqkplqbpdqfphqk  
plqbpdqfphqkplqbpdqfph  
alphabet abbot dappled ape  
pulley quaff bell pull paper  
appall aquarelle parallel to*

**Lorem ipsum c**   
*Utinam habemus assueverit et  
Ex eam nusquam commune. Vi  
Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, te  
Utinam habemus assueverit et est. Elit pertinacia  
Ex eam nusquam commune. Vis eu perpetua inte  
Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, te quaestio dignissin  
Sed ut perspiciatis unde omnis iste natus error sit*

← Calligraphy manual  
by Lloyd Reynolds.  
*Letterform Archive*

↑ Antique Olive Italic  
by Roger Excoffon.  
*fontsgceck.com*

—and Openness, where counter shapes and stroke endings are left open and less complete.

**Unpack  
Pleased  
Images**



← Terza Display Italic  
by Greg Gazdowicz.  
*Commercial Type*

↑ Lettering piece by  
Gen Ramirez. *Gen  
Ramirez, Instagram*

**Simulation**

The third principle I want to look at explores more of the second question I had at the beginning of the project: what the notion of materiality means in the digital context, where it is decoupled from any physical material. While the digital space we work in is also a drawing tool, drawing type digitally works very differently from drawing type with a physical tool. Yet, I hypothesise that all the letters in a typeface need to appear as if drawn using the same hypothetical tool, in order to be visually cohesive. The experience of drawing type digitally is maybe closer to carving than drawing: we are presented with a blank white space, and have to carefully carve the black letters out of it.

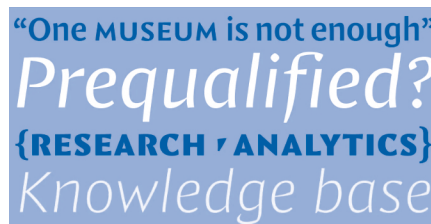
While that brings its own sense of materiality, how can we make digital type feel *drawn*? I have observed that different typefaces have different approaches when it comes to how they express materiality.

First there is reproduction, where the digital product is trying to closely reproduce how the type would look and feel if actually physically produced with physical tools. This leads to results that are adjacent to lettering, while still functioning as a typographic system.

*In 1938, French designer Charles Loupot drew a groundbreaking logotype to promote St. Raphaël aperitif wine. Half a century later, the logo inspired New York designer and illustrator Laurie Rosenwald to work with Cyrus Highsmith on expanding it into a typeface. At once industrial and calligraphic, Loupot is one of the few scripts that offers a successful all-caps setting.*

↑ Loupot typeface by  
Cyrus Highsmith.  
*Occupant Fonts*

A lot of typefaces go for integration, where the letterforms need to be more refined and typographic, so the material aspects are more subtly integrated into the typeface. This works very well for text styles, but also for some display ones.



↑ Comma Base typeface by Martin Majoor.  
*I Love Typography*



↑ Quiz typeface by Lu Leitenperger.  
*Adobe Fonts*

The opposite of this is exaggeration, where an aspect of materiality is heightened and made more prominent. This works better for display styles.



↑ Chop typeface family by Stef Pauwels.  
*TypeMedia*

← Tweak Display typeface by Katja Schimmel.  
*Future Fonts*

Finally there's the approach of simulation. What I mean by this is multiple things. One is the idea of a hypothetical tool that unites the construction and features of all the letterforms in a typeface. It is not necessarily based on any real, existing physical tool, but if there was a tool that would draw a certain letter a certain way, then what would applying that same tool to a different letter result in?

↓ Experimental fonts from a daily challenge by Alex Slobzheninov.  
*Alex Slobzheninov, Instagram*

a stub nib usually lies somewhere between a broad and a pointed nib.

Meteoritic  
Graphitic  
Waywode  
Interfacial  
Fingertips

The other idea of simulation is a way of constructing or simulating a real, physical notion, such as play or speed, through only its sub-phenomena. Theoretically, if we were to draw a typeface that exhibited aspects such as simplification, slant, angularity, and others that we discussed, it should have the feeling of speed, even though it wasn't actually drawn at speed or even using any physical tool at all. In this sense, the approaches like integration and exaggeration are also simply ways of constructing or simulating materiality in a typeface using certain sub-phenomena that point to a certain feel.

**Part II**

**Process**



# Parameterised Drawing

While my preliminary research helped me narrow down my brief in terms of ideology, the project relied on extensive practical research. My hope was to find interesting shapes through drawing, but I didn't know where to start. Being exploratory also meant being quite open-ended initially, and it felt like it would be easy to get lost without a clear intention to drive my process.

Conversations with the teachers helped me solidify that the goal wasn't to become a master calligrapher, but to be able to intentionally generate and expand on ideas through drawing. Kai Bernau, in his talk 'Discourse On The Methods,' discusses the idea of 'grasping' as a way of understanding through one's hands. This was a core tenet of my methodology for this project, as I tried to use an open, exploratory process as a way to understand the tool and the letterforms it produces. I took cues from some of the exercises and projects we worked on in the first few months of EsadType, especially the 'Not A Revival' project, for which we engaged in an experimental phase of tool exploration, using selected models of hand-painted street lettering as a starting point to generate our own interpretations through several iterations of drawings. Speed, size and contrast were some of the parameters I focused on during these iterations, and it helped me find some interesting shapes that I don't think I would have intuitively. Parameterisation in this way helped me add intention to the process of exploration, so I decided to follow a similar methodology for this project as well.



↑ Street lettering used as the model for the Not A Revival project.

D D DOZEN L LIQUOR  
WHEN I WR WROODE  
PAGES OR RATHER TH  
I LIKED ALONE IN TH  
FROM ANY Y MEXGH  
WHICH I HAD BUILT MY  
OF WALDDEN WALDEN  
MASSACHUSETTS AN  
Y Y YOU IN N THE  
A A A W W W W  
BUT MEN LABOUR  
A M M M M S S S  
I SHOULD I I I I I I I I  
TSKENVLDD NOT OBSTRVDD  
K K K K K K K K K K  
DE THE V R R R R R R R R  
WERE PPARRTK R R R R R  
N N O O O O O O O O O O  
CONCERNING R R R R R

**Iron Maiden  
Thunderous  
Night Angel  
Tomstones  
Death Metal  
Ghastliness  
Wild Beasts  
Monstrosity  
Blood Sport**

← Practice sheets from drawing experiments for Not A Revival.

↑ Ghast, my WIP typeface from the Not A Revival project.

The first parameter I focused on was speed, as it was one of the common principles I identified from my references. I started my exploration with a Pilot parallel pen, a standard lettering tool, and tried to write the same passage of text within a progressively faster time. I also started making some digital sketches based on the results of my writing.

let the day of the black  
t w we the da boiling  
num after effects d d  
dity hooray verisimili  
ch h h ht o o off th he  
ld let l how e a a after  
rbe ierk bending

← Experiments with writing a passage within a faster and faster time.

↓ Calligraphy exercise by Arthur Baker. *Letterform Archive*

caligraphe qu/  
ik brown fox jju  
mps ve lazy do

caligrapher quick l brow  
north by fox jumps over  
lazy dog graphic desig  
scribe  
caligrapher quick brown fox  
jumps over the lazy dog  
Caligrapher quick brow  
fox jumps over lazy dog

and my brother and  
an airbender named Aang  
skills are great, he has a  
to save anyone but I bel  
a long time ago the f  
in harmony then ever  
fire nation attacked o

a long time ago the four nations  
then everything changed when  
the avatar master of all four  
the world needed him most  
and my brother and I his  
airbender named Aang and  
one great he has a lot to learn

but I believe Aang can  
ago the four nations his  
everything changed when  
only the avatar master  
stop him but when the  
he vanished, a hundred  
brother and I discovered

the

↑ Digital sketch based on initial explorations.

the

↑ Digital sketch based on later explorations.

While this helped me explore the aspects of speed that I talked about in my research, and I was able to see a clear difference between my initial sketches and my later ones, I felt a bit limited by the tool. Considering the tool itself as a parameter, and the relationship of the tool to the shapes it produces, it follows that new or unconventional tools would lead to new and unconventional shapes. So I started wondering how I could use a tool that, if not forces, then at least favours or incentivises speed. This led me to start exploring with a folded nib. I've seen lettering and calligraphy artists use this tool, and it produces very expressive and fast letterforms. Maybe it's because it holds only a limited amount of ink, which also blots often.



↑ A folded pen. *kalligrafic.com*

work hard  
and be kind.  
that is all.

↑ Calligraphy by Suc Greenseth. *sucgreenseth.com*

Shift into the posture of shape. Let  
your arms float like clouds  
around your body. Shift your  
weight from one foot to another  
in slow motion rising and  
sinking. It's all emptiness.  
Be aware of the curve of your  
shape and its connection  
to the core of your being.  
Just relax and feel the  
energy vibrating within you.

Rough  
Rugged  
RAW

↑ Calligraphy by Lino Ganci. *Lino Ganci, Instagram*

← Calligraphy by Monica Dengo. *monicadengo.com*

My initial explorations with this tool were very uncontrolled and erratic, so I started focusing on rhythm as the main parameter, while retaining speed. I tried writing in all capitals, which forced me to be more intentional with my focus on inter-letter relationships, as it made sure I didn't automatically fall back on cursive letterforms due to the speed at which I was writing. From these explorations, I could already start spotting some very interesting groups of letters, which gave me the spark that was the foundation for the whole family.

From this point, I started experimenting with other parameters, like the surface I was writing on, the size I was writing at, using customised folded nibs of different sizes made from aluminium cans, and applying more conventional structure using this unconventional tool. Each of these explorations offered me different insights, and produced drawings that were jumping off points for building my first digital drafts.

Initial explorations that were uncontrolled and erratic.

ARVEI  
GHIMIN  
QFRSTV

STHJOTLOO  
STHJOTLOO  
STHJOTLOO

A long time ago the four nations lived together in harmony then everything changed when the fire nation attacked only the Avatar master of all four elements could stop them but when the world needed him most he vanished

STHJOTLOO  
STHJOTLOO  
STHJOTLOO

Writing in capitals, with focus on rhythm.

Interesting letters that became the foundation for the type family.

BEFORE

BROTHER

EVERYTHING

BELIEVE

ANYONE

ALTHOUGH

ANYONE

STAVIT

SAVE

HUNDRED

ANYONE

SKILLS

A LOT TO LEARN BEFORE HE'S READY TO SAVE ANYONE BUT I BELIEVE ANYONE CAN SAVE THE WORLD THOUGH BRILLIANT AND THE SLITHY TONES DID GYRE AND GAMBLE IN THE WAVE AND MIMSI WERE THE BOROGEVES AND THE MOMELATH OUTGRABE OFF WITH THEIR HEADS BEHIND THE JABBERNOCK THE JAWS THAT BITE THE CLAWS THAT CAUCH

HIM MUST HE VANISHED A HUNDRED YEARS PASSED AND MY BROTHER AND I DISCOVERED THE NEW AVATAR AN AIRBENDER NAMED AANG AND ALTHOUGH HIS AIRBENDING SKILLS ARE GREAT HE HAS A LOT TO LEARN BEFORE HE'S READY TO SAVE ANYONE BUT I BELIEVE ANYONE CAN SAVE THE WORLD A LONG TIME AGO THE FOUR NATIONS LIVED TOGETHER IN HARMONY THEN EVERYTHING CHANGED WHEN THE FIRE NATION ATTACKED ONLY THE AVATAR MASTER OF ALL FOUR ELEMENTS COULD STOP THEM BUT WHEN THE WORLD NEEDED HIM MUST HE VANISHED A HUNDRED YEARS PASSED AND MY BROTHER & I DISCOVERED THE NEW AVATAR AN AIRBENDER NAMED AANG AND ALTHOUGH HIS AIRBENDING SKILLS

HE HAS A LOT TO LEARN BEFORE HE'S READY TO SAVE ANYONE BUT I BELIEVE ANYONE CAN SAVE THE WORLD. A HUNDRED YEARS PASSED AND MY BROTHER AND I DISCOVERED THE NEW AVATAR AN AIRBENDER NAMED AANG AND ALTHOUGH HIS AIRBENDING

THE NEW AVATAR AN AIRBENDER NAMED AANG AND ALTHOUGH HIS AIRBENDING SKILLS ARE GREAT HE HAS A LOT TO LEARN BEFORE HE'S READY TO SAVE ANYONE BUT I BELIEVE ANYONE CAN SAVE THE WORLD

vanished, a hundred years passed and my brother & I discovered the new avatar an airbender named aang and although his airbending skills are great he has a lot to learn before he's ready to save anyone but I believe aang can save the world.





# First Drafts & Iterations

Building drafts from my writing exercises was an iterative process. There was a lot of back and forth between continuing writing with the folded pen, making digital sketches, and also using digital tools to generate more ideas. I used tracing paper to draw over my old drafts, and to pick out interesting letterforms. As I was building my first digital drafts, a few principles stood out as characteristics of the styles that were emerging:

- Unique structures created by speed and dynamism
- Texture that is a result of the contrast from blotting
- Rhythm from the interplay of sharp and soft elements

Throughout the process, it was important to allow myself to venture out into uncertain territories, rather than fall back on familiar or expected ideas. This meant consciously forgetting or ignoring a lot of preconceived notions of what the structures should look like, especially when it came to developing a text version, and instead relying on what was happening in my writing exercises. Even when digitising my sketches, I had to be careful not to 'over-refine' from the beginning, as is the tendency. This way, I could capture the somewhat haphazard quality of the drawings first, which helped with getting the rhythm and texture right, before zooming in and refining the details. This forced me to eschew a lot of what I'd learned about best practices of node placement, alignment zones and overshoots, and rely simply on what my eyes were telling me. For the title styles, this worked very well, and a lot of the irregularities were retained even in the final product. But for the text styles, it was a challenge finding the right balance between the dynamism from the writing and more refined, conventional shapes that contribute to better reading texture.

↓ Sketches of letters from my experiments, and the initial digital drafts based on them.



UNNING LEARN GREEN GELATINE  
NTATION INTERROGATOR ORANGE  
BANANA RABBIT கந்தகாலை  
பஞ்சு வந்தார் சிந்த சிடி காசு கடி  
சி சிசு லக் மரம் நடி காசும் பாசு

← First digital draft for a display style in Latin and Tamil scripts.

ate agile altar litigate  
green gelatin anger reg  
ergenerational orientat  
it knot quickest ca  
blue blood quip ch

← Trials for adding the lowercase and a second display style.

RAIN BOGGLING BANANA RABBIT  
.ITERATION IGNORABLE RETROG  
O-GOODER DELTA ALTOID DOUI  
intergenerational orientatic  
banana rabbit relatable bea  
retrograde donation addiri  
intergenerational orientatio  
banana rabbit relatable bean  
retrograde donation additio

← Trying upright, rationalised versions of the interesting letter structures in the display.

I tried to experiment with the shapes at this stage of the process. To find surprising forms and add more variability and dynamism, I had to avoid systematising too early. I focused on open vs closed structures, and introducing contrast through structure rather than stroke modulation. I tried keeping inconsistent slant angles in some drafts, while trying to simplify the structures as much as possible in other drafts. With every direction I attempted, I pushed the ideas to their extremes in order to find the functional middle ground. This meant a lot of messy drafts that retained the chaos of my hand-drawn sketches, but also attempts at rationalising and normalising these shapes. As a result, I went through many different styles before arriving at the few that ended up in the designspace of the family.

→ Tracing existing fonts with a folded pen, to understand structure.

Grumpy wizards make toxic  
for the evil Queen and Jack  
C morning when Gregor Samsa  
from troubled dreams he found  
himself transformed in his bed  
a horrible vermin He lay on

→ First drafts for a text cut, in roman and italic.

inn chloroacetate connum  
ala teloi tier teen hi oh otat  
iconolater lucre reecho ten  
pat ell arian tail nitrometer  
ale earn hee ha unthemati  
me manor neutretto a in e  
noniaemia areae othaema



# Conceptualising The Family

The current designspace consists of two title styles, roman and italic text styles in five weights, and a header style. Having three different functions within the text hierarchy helped me explore the same tool and principles in different ways, as I had observed in my preliminary research.

## Title

The title styles were the first to be formulated. A lot of the bones of Title One were already present in my early digital drafts, picked up from structures and interactions I found interesting in my writing exercises. I drew the Latin and Tamil simultaneously, focusing on matching their texture rather than borrowing or translating specific features from one script to the other. Each script retains its own essence while working well together.

Since I had initially found the rhythm of this style by writing in all capitals, the design of the uppercase Latin was straightforward. The Tamil, which doesn't have different cases, was also similar. Of course, they went through several rounds of refinement, but the foundations of the structures stayed mostly the same.

→ Evolution of the Latin uppercase and the Tamil from first draft to their current version.

ADHESION அடிகை  
ADHESION அடிகை  
ADHESION அடிகை  
ADHESION அடிகை

Finding that same texture in the lowercase needed a lot more experimentation. While writing fast in lowercase, it naturally incentivises cursive and running construction, but that was not the structure or texture I was looking for. The semi-connected nature of the style comes from the letters colliding with each other rather than the connected construction of a script style. It took several iterations, also informed by my explorations in the other styles, to fine-tune the balance of speed and tension in the strokes and structures, between exaggeration and subtlety, and sharpness and softness. Continued writing exercises as well as digital sketches where I could play around with the stroke weight helped me refine the structures and texture.

hotel drains  
 hotel drains  
 hotel drains  
 hotel drains

← Evolution of the lowercase from first draft to current version.

GER GRILL GLEE GLITTER GIRLIE TILT TEETER TELL TILE TEA  
 RAGE GLARE REAL ALGAE ILLITERATE IRRIGATE AGILE ALTAI  
 GREEN GELATINE ANGER REGAL EAGLE REGENERATE LINE  
 N INTERROGATOR ORANGE GOOGLING BOOLEAN NIBBLE NO  
 ' கந்தஞ்சாவடி டூல் காவடி அரசக்கூடல் சுவர் பங்கு  
 ிந்தார் அந்த அடி காசு கடினம் நஞ்சு சாந்தம் குடிகாரன்  
 க் மரம் நடி காரம் பாக்கு நம்பர் மாடி சங்கச்சாவடி கு  
 கமகம் கடிகாரம் தாவரம் அங்கம் அவகாசம் தாமதம்  
 ரன் அடிப்படைதாக பசு தாக்கும் வாங்கத்தக்க கூசும்  
 neo-noir noon orbit bitter total obliteration ignorab  
 d endangered intangible doodad do-gooder delta alti  
 attribution abolition guru in lieu duotone glued grud  
 ought harbour annihilate diarrhoea hotel shoulder u

↑ Texture of the first draft.

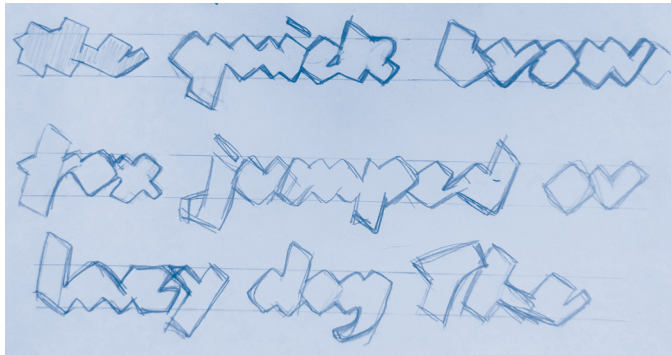
↓ Texture of the current version.

FER GRILL GLEE GLITTER GIRLIE TILT TEETER TELL TILE TEAL A  
 AGE GLARE REAL ALGAE ILLITERATE IRRIGATE AGILE ALTAR L  
 REEN GELATINE ANGER REGAL EAGLE REGENERATE LINEN A  
 I INTERROGATOR ORANGE GOOGLING BOOLEAN NIBBLE NON  
 சாவடி டூல் காவடி அரசக்கூடல் சுவர் பங்கு டூட்டி ஞா  
 காசு கடினம் நஞ்சு சாந்தம் குடிகாரன் கூடாரம் தானம் L  
 ாக்கு நம்பர் மாடி சங்கச்சாவடி ஞாபகம் ரத்தம் அப்படி  
 ிரம் அங்கம் அவகாசம் தாமதம் வஞ்சம் வாங்கும் சமான  
 பசு தாக்கும் வாங்கத்தக்க கூசும் அப்பம் வகுப்பான rel  
 ter total obliteration ignorable retrograde donation addi  
 o-gooder delta altoid double trouble bundle ululation au  
 ued grudge edition didgeridoo ulterior hundred bad habi  
 der unionise assist hirsute gross salient understanding st

The heaviness of the second title style allows the uppercase and lowercase to follow different routes while still existing in harmony with each other. The uppercase started from a digital extrapolation of Title One, while the lowercase borrows from more dynamic constructions from my writing. As the letters blend together, the attention is drawn to the shape of words rather than individual letters. In my initial sketches, some words looked very interesting, while some were just illegible. Adding some contrast helped a lot with the legibility, but not just in stroke weight. The contrast between sharp and soft elements was crucial to the rhythm of Title Two.

STAND BOILER HUG  
 STAND BOILER HUG  
 STAND BOILER HUG

← Playing around with stroke weight digitally through interpolation and extrapolation.



← Initial sketches for a second title style, traced from my writing experiments.

store estoria skate ace  
 nesture east conceites  
 arrow ill stroke skinnil  
 choice ace sauce asset  
 technical

← First digital draft of Title Two.

→ Evolution of the texture of Title Two, experimenting with stroke contrast and the interplay of sharp and soft elements.

tectonic millions eas  
 seasonal tickets tech  
 stick attack skin ask  
 mailman connection  
 technical

the sea-snake cecilia  
 tectonic millions eas  
 seasonal tickets tech  
 stick attack skin ask  
 technical

the sea-snake cecilia  
 tectonic millions eas  
 seasonal tickets tech  
 stick attack skin ask  
 technical

→ Texture of current version of Title Two.

the seasnake cecilia king  
 tectonic millions cassettes  
 seasonal tickets technical  
 stick attack skin ask has  
 mailman connection store  
 technical

**ADHESION adhesion**

**ADHESION adhesion**

**ADHESION adhesion**  
**ஐதீஷன்**

**ADHESION adhesion**  
**ஐதீஷன்**

← Evolution of Title Two from initial draft to current version.

While Title One and Title Two share a lot of DNA, they also have their own unique elements, offering two strong title styles individually, that can also complement each other when used together. Title One works well in short titles, but is even more delightful in longer titles and even short paragraphs. Title Two is better utilised in short, punchy titles that need to grab the most attention.

↓ The two title styles in use together.

*Winner of the ACADEMY AWARD FOR BEST PICTURE*

**Everything  
Everywhere  
All At Once**

*a film by Daniels*

→ First few drafts of Text Roman and Italic.

### Text

The text styles went through extensive iteration before arriving at their current form. While the unconventional nature of the title styles allowed for Latin and Tamil to be developed in parallel, with the vastly different roots and text conventions of both scripts, the approach had to be slightly different here. For the scope of this diploma, I eventually decided to focus only on Latin for the text, given the time that I had. Based on my explorations of drawing conventional structures using this unconventional tool, my first drafts had stroke modulation with a reverse stress, as necessitated by the angle of the tool. I initially started without serifs, in order to focus on the structures, and later made a draft with serifs as well. This direction, while having a unique character and some interesting shapes, felt quite calligraphic, and didn't have the dynamism and liveliness of the title styles, especially in the roman. The challenge was to harmonise the philosophy of approach between the two. The display was playing a game of structural energy, capturing the tool in the way it affected the letter structures, but this draft of the text was using the materiality of the tool more literally. It had elements of interesting structure, so I wanted to highlight those rather than the material effects of the tool.

**helium carton**  
**helium carton**  
**helium carton**  
*helium carton*  
*helium carton*  
*helium carton*

So, to focus only on the structural aspects, I took my initial approach of no serifs to the extreme, and also got rid of any stroke modulation as well. I drew over the structure of Title One, and my first text direction, and used that as a starting point to build sans serif and semi-serif text drafts. Making drafts of varying weights, from extra light to extra bold, also helped easily expand on these ideas through digital interpolation. This direction captured the energy of the hand-drawn structures, and worked much better alongside the title styles.

abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz  
 abcdefghijklm  
 nopqrstuvwxyz

← Sketches for a new text draft, traced over Title One and my earlier drafts, to focus on the structural aspects.

**hamburefontsi**vlc  
*hamburefontsi*vlc

← Semi-serif text draft.

**hamburefontsi**vlc  
*hamburefontsi*vlc  
**hamburefontsi**vlc  
*hamburefontsi*vlc  
**hamburefontsi**vlc  
*hamburefontsi*vlc

← Sans serif text draft on a weight axis.

arduousness sardonic destined to dream indefinite doodads  
 droid bedouin drab additional hubris vindicated effervescent  
 attentive unassailed fast dominoes lederhosen *immeasurable*  
*latino feistiness flaunt individualities tandoor burnt verruca*  
*omens confederacies centennial clan evolution inherit rhubarb*  
*arsenic fibrous reaffirm thumbs handicrafts silence* calendar  
 harbour incentivise unromantic machiavellian nefarious dissent  
 culture vulture curtailed monolith multitudes substantiate  
 arduousness sardonic destined to dream indefinite doodads  
 droid bedouin drab additional hubris vindicated effervescent  
 attentive unassailed fast dominies lederhosen *immeasurable*  
*latino feistiness flaunt individualities tandoor burnt verruca*  
*omens confederacies centennial clan evolution inherit rhubarb*  
*arsenic fibrous reaffirm thumbs handicrafts silence* calendar  
 harbour incentivise unromantic machiavellian nefarious  
 dissent culture vulture curtailed monolith multitudes  
 substantiate **arduousness sardonic destined to dream**  
**indefinite doodads droid bedouin drab additional hubris**  
**vindicated effervescent attentive unassailed fast dominies**  
**lederhosen immeasurable latino feistiness flaunt**  
**individualities tandoor burnt verruca omens confederacies**  
**centennial clan evolution inherit rhubarb arsenic fibrous**  
**reaffirm thumbs handicrafts silence** calendar harbour  
 incentivise unromantic machiavellian nefarious dissent  
 culture vulture curtailed monolith multitudes substantiate

↑ Texture of the sans serif text draft.

At this stage, I considered sticking with a sans serif for the text, but something about the character of the first serif draft continued to call out to me, so I decided to give the serifs another shot. With the foundations of the structure established by the sans serif drafts, I was able to find a direction for the serif text style that had the same energy.

→ Building upon the sans serif draft to make another serif attempt.

**hamburefontsi**vlc  
*hamburefontsi*vlc  
**hamburefontsi**vlc  
*hamburefontsi*vlc

While the lighter weights retain a low contrast, the contrast increases as the weight increases. Going back to a more traditional contrast axis made the texture more familiar, while retaining the hand-drawn feel of the structures, especially in the italic. The roman matches it by having open structures and some gestural elements as well. Sharpening the features helped add to the energy, removing the softness and 'material' effect that was still there in the first few attempts. The title and text styles now fit well with each other, and within the graphic context that I had envisioned at the start of the project.

latino feistiness flaunt individualities tandoor burnt  
*unassailed fast dominoes lederhosen immeasurable*  
 arduousness sardonic indefinite doodads droid fast  
*additional hubris vindicated effervescent attentive*  
**evolution inherit rhubarb arsenic fibrous affirm**  
*verruca omens confederations centennial clam*

← Texture of new serif text draft in multiple weights.

|                     |                     |                     |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| k → k               | f → f               | y → y               |
| <i>k</i> → <i>k</i> | <i>f</i> → <i>f</i> | <i>y</i> → <i>y</i> |
| <b>k</b> → <b>k</b> | <b>f</b> → <b>f</b> | <b>y</b> → <b>y</b> |
| <i>k</i> → <i>k</i> | <i>f</i> → <i>f</i> | <i>y</i> → <i>y</i> |

← Sharpening the features and refining the structures.

↓ Texture comparison between the first serif text draft and the current version.

arduousness sardonic destined to dream indefinite doodads droid  
 bedouin drab additional hubris vindicated effervescent attentive  
*unassailed fast dominies lederhosen immeasurable latino feistiness*  
*flaunt individualities tandoor burnt verruca omens confederacies*  
 centennial clan evolution inherit rhubarb arsenic fibrous reaffirm  
 thumbs handicrafts silence calendar harbour incentivise unromantic  
 arduousness sardonic destined to dream indefinite doodads droid bedouin drab  
 additional hubris vindicated effervescent attentive unassailed fast dominies  
*lederhosen immeasurable latino feistiness flaunt individualities tandoor burnt*  
*verruca omens confederacies centennial clan evolution inherit rhubarb arsenic*  
 fibrous reaffirm thumbs handicrafts silence calendar harbour incentivise  
 unromantic machiavellian nefarious dissent culture vulture curtailed monolith

## Header

The header style is the least baked part of the family at the moment. Based on the sans serif text extrabold draft, it acts as a bridge between the title and text styles, adding a third point in the hierarchy. It presents more rationalised versions of the interesting structures found across the family.

→ Building a header style from the sans serif.

**hamburefontsvlc**  
**hamburefontsvlc**  
**hamburefontsvlc**

↓ All the styles in the family in use together.

## Medical Chronicle

### A Weekly Check-up on Medical News

#### Doubts over insect bite treatment

People should consider using a cold, wet cloth to treat insect bites instead of turning to over-the-counter remedies, experts say. Prof Michael Siva-Jothy, from Sheffield University's Department of Animal and Plant Sciences, recruited 29 brave volunteers to test the theory further, watching the bedbugs as they found a place to feed and removing them only as they were about to bite.

An investigation has concluded that there is little evidence that creams, painkillers and anti-inflammatories often used for bites actually work. In any case, said *Drug and Therapeutics Bulletin* researchers, the reactions got better by themselves in most cases. Midges, mosquitoes, flies, fleas and bed-bugs account for most bites. A variety of remedies are sold over the counter in pharmacies to relieve the

itching, pain and swelling. Other scientists have suggested that swapping thicker fur for clothes was a way of making insect bites and parasitic infestations less likely. **Prof. Mark Pagel**, an evolutionary biologist at the University of Reading, said that biting parasites remain a major cause of disease and death worldwide, making them a potentially enormous evolutionary pressure on early man.



# Expanding Ideas

As the designspace started taking shape, and the artistic direction for each style was solidifying, the next step was to expand on these established ideas. This involved exploring stylistic variations, and more considerations about the functionality of the type family in its intended context—expanding the glyphset to support more languages, determining how many weight instances were needed for the text styles and refining their interpolation values, and assessing all the styles in the family in relation to one another, so they work well in unison.

For the scope of the diploma, we were asked to draw an extended glyphset in one master, which I did for Title One, including figures, punctuation, symbols, and diacritics. The other masters currently have A-z, along with figures and some basic accents and punctuation. The title styles also include Tamil.

↓ Current designspace of the type family.

**Tac Title One**

Tac Text Light *and Light Italic*

**Tac Title Two**

Tac Text Regular *and Italic*

**Tac Header Bold**

Tac Text Medium *and Medium Italic*

Tac Text Bold *and Bold Italic*

Tac Text Extrabold *and Extrabold Italic*

விசித்திரம் → வீத்திரம்

↑ Default forms for 'i' vowel signs in Tamil.

↑ Stylistic set for 'i' vowel signs in Tamil.

*The bill showed: appetizers 15.00 + mains 45.50 + desserts 12.50 = 73.00 total. José smiled: "This beats eating açai bowls in Brasília... aren't you glad we came?" The waiter, Czesaw from Wrocław, brought Gewürztraminer (vintage '08). Zoë proposed a toast to their friends: •Àlex from Cádiz, •Èva from Nîmes, •Ìgor from Tiranë, •Òscar from Córdoba, •Ûrula from Plze. They raised their glasses: "À-votre santé! Skål! ;Salud! Saúde! Prost!"*

↑ Test case for extended glyphset, including numbers, punctuation, diacritics, and symbols.

**Part III**

**OUTCOMES**



# Specimens & Samplers

I enjoyed playing with the graphic design for this project, because I had a specific context in mind, but also a lot of freedom to experiment. It was particularly fun to incorporate texture, halftone, and distress effects to simulate the old and cheap prints that I was taking inspiration from. Printing with a risograph machine really helped me amplify these aspects. It ended up being the perfect medium given the hand-drawn, photo-composed nature of the references in my visual context. I hope I have been able to capture a similar playful, retro feel.

→ A risograph poster set in Tac's Title styles.







Tac Text Light

Latin Basic

A Â Ã Ä Å Ç È É Ê Ë Ì Í Î Ï Ñ Ò Ó Ô Õ Ö × Ø Ù Ú Û Ü Ý Þ à â ã ä å ç è é ê ë ì í î ï ð ñ ò ó ô õ ö ø ù ú û ü ý ÿ

Numbers and Basic Punctuation

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 . , : ; ... ! ? ' " " " ' " - - -

Tac Text Light Italic

Latin Basic

*A Â Ã Ä Å Ç È É Ê Ë Ì Í Î Ï Ñ Ò Ó Ô Õ Ö × Ø Ù Ú Û Ü Ý Þ à â ã ä å ç è é ê ë ì í î ï ð ñ ò ó ô õ ö ø ù ú û ü ý ÿ*

Numbers and Basic Punctuation

*0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 . , : ; ... ! ? ' " " " ' " - - -*

16pt

“O sphinx of black quartz, judge my vow!”

“O *sphinx of black quartz, judge my vow!*”

Tac Text Regular

Latin Basic

A Â Ã Ä Å Ç È É Ê Ë Ì Í Î Ï Ñ Ò Ó Ô Õ Ö × Ø Ù Ú Û Ü Ý Þ à â ã ä å ç è é ê ë ì í î ï ð ñ ò ó ô õ ö ø ù ú û ü ý ÿ

Numbers and Basic Punctuation

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 . , : ; ... ! ? ' " " " ' " - - -

Tac Text Italic

Latin Basic

*A Â Ã Ä Å Ç È É Ê Ë Ì Í Î Ï Ñ Ò Ó Ô Õ Ö × Ø Ù Ú Û Ü Ý Þ à â ã ä å ç è é ê ë ì í î ï ð ñ ò ó ô õ ö ø ù ú û ü ý ÿ*

Numbers and Basic Punctuation

*0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 . , : ; ... ! ? ' " " " ' " - - -*

16pt

“O sphinx of black quartz, judge my vow!”

“O *sphinx of black quartz, judge my vow!*”

Tac Text Medium

Latin Basic

A Â Ã Ä Å Æ Ç È É Ê Ë Ì Í Î Ï Ñ Ò Ó Ô Õ Ö × Ø Ù Ú Û Ü Ý Þ à â ã  
ä å æ ç è é ê ë ì í î ï ð ñ ò ó ô õ ö ø ù ú û ü ý þ

Numbers and Basic Punctuation

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 . , : ; ... ! ? ' ' " " ' " - - -

Tac Text Medium Italic

Latin Basic

*A Â Ã Ä Å Æ Ç È É Ê Ë Ì Í Î Ï Ñ Ò Ó Ô Õ Ö × Ø Ù Ú Û Ü Ý Þ à â ã  
ä å æ ç è é ê ë ì í î ï ð ñ ò ó ô õ ö ø ù ú û ü ý þ*

Numbers and Basic Punctuation

*0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 . , : ; ... ! ? ' ' " " ' " - - -*

16pt

“O sphinx of black quartz, judge my vow!”

*“O sphinx of black quartz, judge my vow!”*

Tac Text Bold

Latin Basic

**A Â Ã Ä Å Æ Ç È É Ê Ë Ì Í Î Ï Ñ Ò Ó Ô Õ Ö × Ø Ù Ú Û Ü Ý Þ à â ã  
ä å æ ç è é ê ë ì í î ï ð ñ ò ó ô õ ö ø ù ú û ü ý þ**

Numbers and Basic Punctuation

**0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 . , : ; ... ! ? ' ' " " ' " - - -**

Tac Text Bold Italic

Latin Basic

***A Â Ã Ä Å Æ Ç È É Ê Ë Ì Í Î Ï Ñ Ò Ó Ô Õ Ö × Ø Ù Ú Û Ü Ý Þ à â ã  
ä å æ ç è é ê ë ì í î ï ð ñ ò ó ô õ ö ø ù ú û ü ý þ***

Numbers and Basic Punctuation

***0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 . , : ; ... ! ? ' ' " " ' " - - -***

16pt

**“O sphinx of black quartz, judge my vow!”**

***“O sphinx of black quartz, judge my vow!”***



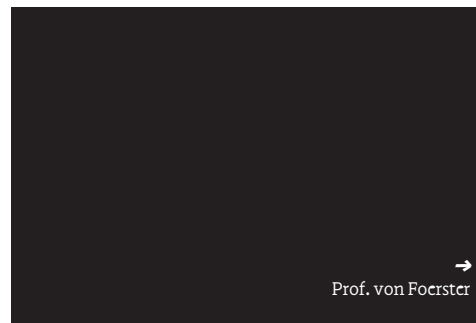
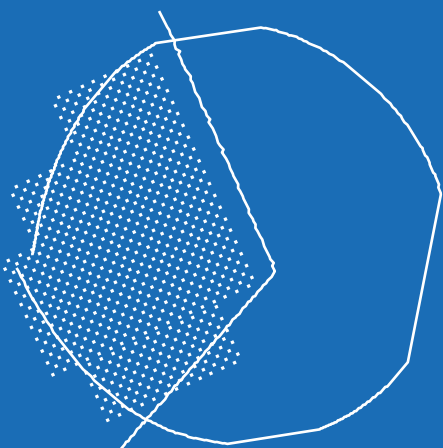
# Countdown to Catastrophe

written by a correspondent for **TIME**, on Nov. 14, 1960.

Doomsday is set for *Friday, Nov. 13, 2026*. On that date, the human population will have expanded so far as to approach infinity and thus will automatically annihilate itself.

The date is based on the population growth for the last 2,000 years and on the “optimistic” view that human proficiency at surviving and reproducing increases as the size of the population increases. The theory appears in an article in *Science*. This view has worked well for over a 100 human generations, the article notes. And, “we may conclude with considerable confidence that it will hold for at least three generations more,” the article adds.

Authors of the article are physicist Prof. von Foerster and two students, Patricia M. Mora and Lawrence W. Amiot, from the University of Illinois. In their study the authors show that, with the proper figures, Charlemagne could have predicted doomsday accurately within 300 years. Elizabeth I of England could have predicted the critical date within 110 years, and Napoleon within 30 years.



Prof. von Foerster →



Prof. von Foerster says that population debaters fall into two camps: “The optimists who see in the population explosion a welcome expansion of their clientele, be it consumers of baby goods, voters, or devoted souls, and, on the other hand, pessimists, who worry about the rapid depletion of the natural resources and the irreversible poisoning of our biosphere, the life-supporting regions of earth.”

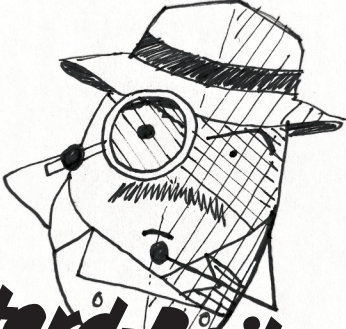
If the human species avoids large-scale disaster such as nuclear war, sets up a cooperative world society, develops technical methods that yield an unlimited food supply and continues to increase at an ever-quickening rate, the climax will come at a calculable date in the future, which Von Foerster calls  $t_0$ . “For obvious reasons,” he says, “ $t_0$  shall be called ‘doomsday,’ since it is on that date that  $N$ , the number of ‘elements,’ or people, goes to infinity, and the clever population annihilates itself. Our great-great-grandchildren will not starve. They will be squeezed to death.” The calculations show  $t_0$  to be A.D. 2026.87 plus or minus five and a half years. Searching for the center of this doomtime span, Prof. von Foerster found that a Friday the Thirteenth would fall conveniently in November 2026.

Prof. von Foerster does not really believe that the human race will breed itself to universe-filling infinity in 66 years. He uses his equation to illustrate in an attention-getting manner that any population that increases at an accelerating rate is headed for ultimate trouble. But he believes that “there is no need to wait until an external mechanism influences human activity. Since man’s environment becomes less and less influenced by ‘natural forces’ and more and more by social forces determined by man, he himself can take control over his fate.” Enter birth control. Von Foerster declares that if mankind wants to avoid the doomsday of infinitely crowded population, it must establish a control mechanism, a “peoplo-stat,” to keep the world’s population at a desired level. This can be done at present by what he considers comparatively painless methods, such as heavy taxation on families with more than two children. “Tomorrow, of course,” says Von Foerster, “it will be more difficult, since the gap between birth rate and death rate is widening every minute.”

Prof. von Foerster is the father of three children.

**STAR**  
XEROX

**ஸ்டார்**  
நகலகல்



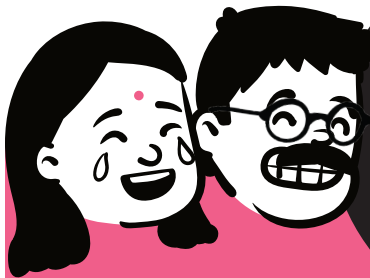
**Hard-Boiled  
Detective**

**Common  
Parlance**

Langage Courant

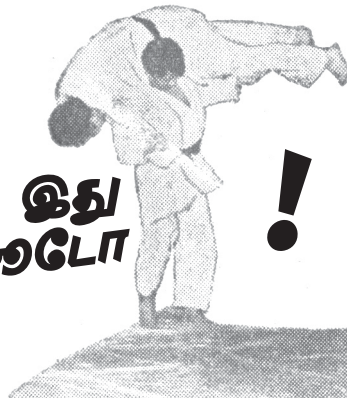
Issue 1: Onomatopoeia

சுதீச வழுக்கடு




**தலபாடி!  
தலபாடி!  
தலபாடி!**

**THE  
Wacky  
SCIENCE SHOW**



**இது  
ஜாட்லா !**



**இது  
என்னடா ?**

**Captain Billy's  
Whiz Bang!**



## *Learnings & Next Steps*

For the sake of clarity, the process in this book was presented in a somewhat linear fashion, but the actual process was anything but. I did not have a clear idea of what I wanted to draw when I started this project, and this was mostly by design. As I mentioned earlier, I wanted to get better at applying a more open-ended, yet thorough approach to my work. Of all the post-graduate courses in typeface design across the world, I wanted to come to EsadType mainly because I felt that the way it is structured would allow for this learning. It is eighteen months long, and the six extra months really give us more time to explore our areas of interest and further flesh out our ideas and end result, while not have to rush at breakneck speed the entire time. It is also very self directed. I believe it is the only one among the major programmes in this field where applicants are chosen based on a proposal for their final project in addition to their portfolio. The teachers encourage an exploratory approach, forcing you to question your brief and all the preconceived ideas hidden within it. They have their own opinions and preferences, and will voice it, but in the end, are only here to guide you to better execute what you want your project to be. I believe this creates an environment where you can get as much out of the course as you put into it.

My first few years as a type designer were mostly about improving my technical skills. A lot of learning type design is learning to see. In the beginning, this is about things like proportions, white spaces, and overshoots, but eventually, it is also about things like context, mood, function, and taste. There is a delightful moment from a Sixty Minutes interview with Rick Rubin where, upon confessing to having no technical musical ability but being decisive about his likes and dislikes, the interviewer asks him what he is being paid for then, and he responds, eyes closed, “The confidence that I have in my taste and my ability to express what I feel has proven helpful for artists.” I don’t know much about Rick Rubin, but this rings true to me, as a crucial aspect of most creative fields, if not others as well. This experience has helped me learn a lot about the artistic direction that goes into developing a type family—how to analyse and articulate what I like and don’t like as a consumer of design, how to use that to identify what I want my own creative output to be, and how to re-examine the questions and ideas I have at the beginning of the creative process.

Through working on this project, I think my conception of what contributes to the materiality of a typeface has expanded a lot. In my preliminary research, I was able to formulate a way of thinking about it that I hadn't before. The practical research backed up those observations, but the lines between all these different approaches and techniques were a lot blurrier than I had expected. The display styles ended up more obviously inspired by hand-drawn forms than I had initially envisioned, but that helped it fit much better within the graphic context I wanted it to. Another thing I hadn't anticipated during my theorising was the amount of influence the letter structures themselves would have on the energy of the text styles. With both title and text, it was very useful taking a top-down approach: working first on the inter-letter relationships, overall structures, proportions and rhythm in order to get the texture right, before zooming in on refining the finer details and features. In this way, I was able to achieve the feeling of speed and expressivity, which was the primary goal of my brief. I am now more confident in my ability to use drawing in an exploratory and intentional manner as part of my type design process.

Tac remains a work in progress, with several aspects still left to expand on. All the styles need more refinement. Afterwards, I would like to further extend the glyphset of the text styles. I am very interested to see how I can apply the same ethos to Tamil text. I think the header style is a valuable addition to the functionality of the family, but it is still nascent. I need to add kerning, especially to the text styles. I also want to do more graphic design and print production using my typeface, maybe designing a periodical publication that highlights both the typeface and my interest in the subjects of everyday design, language and culture, while helping me learn more about printing techniques.

Overall, working on this project has given me a lot of ideas and questions that I will continue pursuing in my future projects. This was just my exploration of one very unique, unconventional tool that matched the feeling I wanted, and I'd love to try exploring other tools, mediums, and feelings in a similar manner. But before all that, I am looking forward to taking a break for a couple of months, to travel and spend time with my friends and family, so I can return to this project and my design practice with renewed vision and vigour.



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The work of many artists who designed Tamil magazines and hand-painted street lettering.



# Gratitude

My EsadType journey began with an itch for new challenges, experiences, and environments, and the past 18 months have certainly given me that. I am grateful to many for making this journey possible—

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↓ EsadType batch 2024–26.

*From L to R: Kamyab Jafari, Patrick Ometto,  
Yunru Li, Sidharth Jaishankar, and Gabin Traversc.*



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