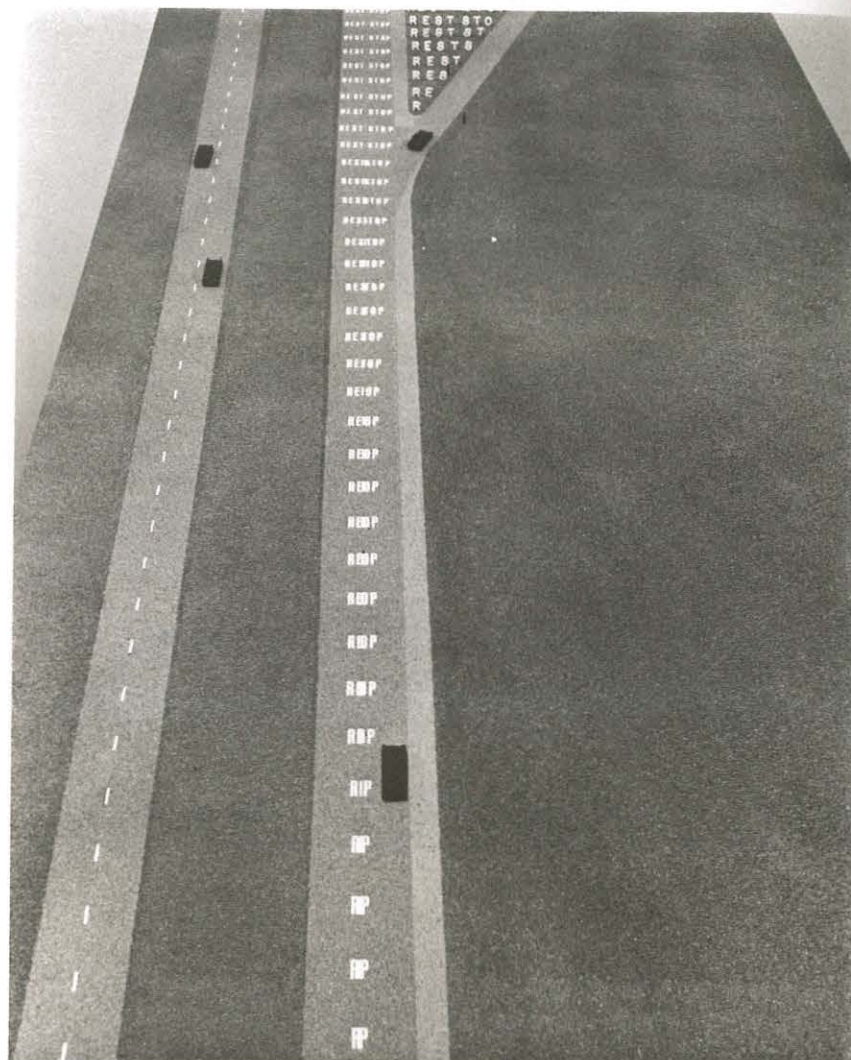


Figure 12

"Prototype Rest Stop" developed for the Nebraska Bicentennial Interstate 80 Sculpture Project, Alison Sky, 1975. The stencilled words REST STOP begin to appear on the roadway approximately one mile before the actual rest stop site. The letters begin to grow slowly out of the dotted highway line—moving outwards until the words are completely formed—approximately one quarter mile from the actual site. REST STOP continues to repeat itself. Upon reaching the grass strip the letters begin to build on the strip in three-dimensional form starting with the letter R until the words are repeated in

both two and three-dimensional form. At the center of the rest area, the three-dimensional letters begin to drop away until they finally disappear at the exit tip. At this point the stencilled letters reverse themselves and slowly return into the pavement until they finally disappear. The reversed letters can be read through the mirror of the ongoing automobile, indicating that the rest area has been passed.



Visible Language, XI 2 (Spring 1977), © 1977, Visible Language, c/o The Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland, Ohio USA 44106 [Author's address: 60 Greene St., New York, NY 10012.]

## Reflections on the Theme: At the Edge of Meaning

Fernand Baudin

As a book designer

I am concerned with the Latin alphabet  
and with literate communication.

In this context new technologies do not add new meaning to any particular copy;  
yet, in the last quarter century  
there has been such a change in the reproduction of texts alone  
that one may call it a revolution—or an evolution,  
depending on the point of view adopted.  
The essential fact is, of course, the passage from lead to film,  
from mechanical to photocomposition,  
with all the consequent technological, industrial, social, and artistic developments.

In any changing situation, as well as in a changing world,  
we naturally look for a point of permanence,  
a constant.

What is the one constant among the changing technologies?

Writing.

That is what the symbols and their layout have always been about,  
no matter if the materials are hot metal, film,  
pens, pencils, brushes, chisels, punches, paper, papyrus, or parchment.  
However, it is not a matter of one particular material,  
or one particular form of physical virtuosity.

By writing I mean the systematic ordering and recording of thought.

This is what made the difference between prehistory and history:  
the ordering, editing, recording, and publishing of intelligent, rational thought.  
Past symbols and past symbol systems

may or may not have been better than Latin script.

Whatever the case, I can not see why and how we should or could possibly  
return to Sumerian or any other previous system of symbols.

Here and now we are essentially concerned with the roman alphabet  
and its future.

There are, of course, a number of other living systems of symbols;  
however, unless Asia suddenly overturns the present political balance of the planet,  
we may assume that the future of the roman alphabet  
spells the future of writing.



In the course of two or three millenia alphabets have been written with all kinds of tools and many kinds of materials. Why should we now suddenly become partial to one particular tool, or sentimental about one particular material or technology—to the exclusion of the rest?

On the other hand, governments and teachers no longer feel any concern about the proper teaching of handwriting in the schools. On the other hand, the cooperation (such as it was) between typesetters and printer-compositors which kept the tradition of competent writing alive in the typographic era, is disappearing fast.

Additionally, there are people who believe that the emotional, associative, audiovisual means of participation could and should replace written language and rational communication—and, apparently, the sooner the better.

This leads sooner or later to a most "undemocratic" situation where all the expert software and the expensive hardware necessary for the competent mass production of written (i.e. rational) communication would be in a very few hands.

Most people would be able to read but would be unable to write, i.e., to formulate and to communicate a personal thought.

The situation would not be any better, or more democratic if written communication became the preserve of the people in power.

Writing is the only way we know to prepare and to organize any complex human activity. Writing is equivalent to power.

Writing, in the broadest sense, is so complex and so intimately interwoven with every aspect of individual and collective life that not one aspect of it can be neglected—not everyone needs calligraphy; but legibility (i.e., layout as well as letterforms) is of the essence.

The layout (i.e., the planning) is far more important than letterforms.

Too much attention given to letterforms distracts from the planning which is the heart of writing.

The responsibility for the design of letterforms is the business of a very small minority of experts.

The planning of any piece of writing should be the concern of a majority of competent authors assisting their editors and publishers.

In the future, universities—even more than art and design schools—should be extremely interested in writing courses.

Everyone agrees that you have to thresh out your own ideas down to the smallest detail in order to know exactly what to write, in what order to write it, and how to organize it.

Far more students should be made to realize that the choice of material, color, size, format—in short, the planning of every material aspect of a piece of writing (whatever the production method)—is part of the demonstration. The effect is immediate; subliminal perhaps, but final. If anything goes wrong,

readers may lay a piece of writing aside after a mere glance. Typists cannot be expected to assume by themselves the burden of the full tradition of writing; nor can engineers, technologists, art schools, or design schools.

Writing is far more indeed than handwriting or calligraphy. A piece of writing should be clearly understood to include in varying degrees literary and intellectual connotation (that is why the practical study of letterforms is equivalent to an art course). That its material aspects are part of the demonstration is known to archaeologists and codicologists as well as to the commercial artists and copywriters. Why then should intelligent students be less involved with the format—with the meaning of the physical appearance of their writings—than an archaeologist or a commercial artist or copywriter? Why should authors be left incompetent, helpless, utterly unable to assist their publisher or to have control over the appearance of their work? Why should readers accept any scientific publication that looks like a mess? In short, why should people acquiesce in being only the "originators" of their writings instead of creators in the fullest sense possible.

The new typefaces which design schools, art schools, industries, and technologies are producing for the new technologies are merely reproductions or distortions of past letterforms. Probably the best way to introduce a change in the right direction would be to involve the people and the places where the typographic tradition began: the students and the universities.

I do not suggest any exclusion or any return to a particular aspect of the past; I do suggest projecting an old tradition of writing in a new direction, in new technologies, in an ever changing world.

At any period the initiative and competence in various uses and stages of writing is distributed over any number of categories of people. Today not one category should be excluded from handwriting, not because it leads towards any particular art form, but because this very simple ability is the key to individual and collective power—as well as to independent thought. Today, with all letterforms past and present available, when even handwriting can be cheaply mass reproduced our educational institutions should assume a new responsibility in the teaching of writing in the fullest, creative sense.



On the Theme:  
At the Edge of Meaning

Ferdinand Baudin

change

As a book designer, I am concerned with the Latin alphabet & with literate communication. In this context new technologies as such do not add new meaning to any particular copy; yet in the last quarter of a century there has been such change in the reproduction of texts alone that one may call it a revolution or an evolution depending on the point of view adopted. Whatever the point of view, the essential fact is, of course, the passage from lead to film, from ~~typography~~ mechanical to photocomposition, with all the consequent technological, industrial, & social & artistic developments.

a constant

In any changing situation, as well as in a changing world, we naturally look for a point of permanence, a constant. What is the one constant among the changing technologies? Writing. That is what the symbols & their layout have always been about, no matter if the materials are hot metal, film, pens, pencils, brushes, chisels, punches, paper, papyrus, & parchment. However, it is not a matter of one particular material, or one particular form of physical virtuosity. By writing, I mean the systematic ordering & recording of thought. This is what made the difference between prehistory & history: the ordering, editing, recording & publishing of intelligent, rational thought. ~~With the help of any number of symbols & systems~~  
Past symbols & past



*or may not,*  
systems *may* have been  
better than Latin script  
~~in some respects~~. Whatever the

case, I cannot see why & how we  
*possibly*  
should or could return to Sumerian or  
any other previous system of symbols.

Here & now we are concerned with the  
Roman alphabet & its future. There  
*of course,*  
are, ~~also~~ a number of other living  
systems of symbols; however unless Asia  
suddenly overturns the present political  
balance of the planet, we may assume  
*that*  
the future of the Roman alphabet spells  
the future of writing.

*Roman  
alphabet*

In the course of two or three millenia  
alphabets have been written with all  
kinds of tools and many kinds of mater-  
ials. Why should we now suddenly  
become partial to one particular tool  
or sentimental about one particular  
material or technology to the exclusion  
of the rest? ~~I can see little or no~~  
~~interest in any discussion that comes~~  
~~down to that.~~ It seems to me far more

Writing

typographic  
tradition

power

letterforms

important to consider and to overcome  
the lack of interest in the teaching of  
writing. On the one hand, governments  
& teachers no longer feel any concern  
about the proper teaching of *handwriting*  
in the schools. On the other hand, the  
cooperation (such as it was) between

typefounders and printer-compositors  
which kept the tradition of competent  
writing alive in the typographic era,  
is disappearing fast. Additionally,  
there are people who believe that the  
emotional, associative, audiovisual  
means of participation should &  
could replace written language and  
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sooner or later to a most "undemocratic"  
situation where all the expert software  
~~and~~ and the extensive hardware *competent*  
necessary for the ~~production~~ *mass*  
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Most people would be able to read but  
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Everyone agrees that you have to thresh out your own ideas down to the smallest detail in order to know exactly what to write, in what order to write it, and how to organize it. Far more students should be made to realize that the choice of material, color, size, format--in short, the planning of every material aspect of a piece of writing (whatever the production method) is part of the demonstration. The effect is immediate; subliminal perhaps, but final. If anything goes wrong, readers will lay a piece of writing aside after a mere glance. Typists cannot be expected to assume by themselves the burden of the full tradition of writing; nor can engineers, technologists, art schools, or design schools.

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format

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independent  
thought



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## A Study in Basic Design and Meaning Daniel Friedman

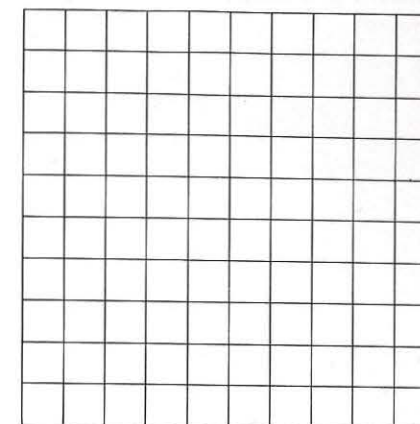


Figure 1  
The first essential aspect is to accommodate or accept a given system (the line grid). The neutral grid is the first step in each sequence.

Basic design is the advanced study of fundamentals. It is a humanistic study whose process involves the reduction of visual ideas to universals, universals which transcend pure aesthetics. It can be an analog for more complex design processes or a study of visual metaphors for aspects of urban life. Basic design isolates factors of visual perception so that they can be easily observed, analyzed, played with, controlled, learned, transposed, and applied.

The designs shown here are selected from a book which contains exercises in basic design performed upon a simple line grid. The exercises have been performed by graduate students in graphic design at Yale University. The line grid was predetermined; it is a neutral field upon which a wide range of design operations can be played. Each student designed a sequence of images. Each sequence is based on four essential aspects but the total number of images in each sequence may vary.