A piece of writing should be clearly understood to include in varying degrees literary and intellectual connotations (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 publishers 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 "originator" of their writings instead of creators in the fullest possible sense.

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 toward 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.

A Study in
Basic Design and
Meaning
Daniel Friedman

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.

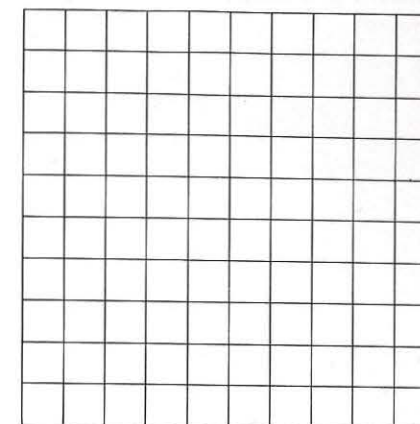Figure 1
The first essential aspect is to accommodate or accept a given system (the line grid). The neutral grid is the first step in each sequence.

Figure 2

The second image in each group defines a simple design operation, an operation reduced to its most generic state. It defines what can be described as a symbol of an intrinsic idea out of the large inventory of visual "syntax."
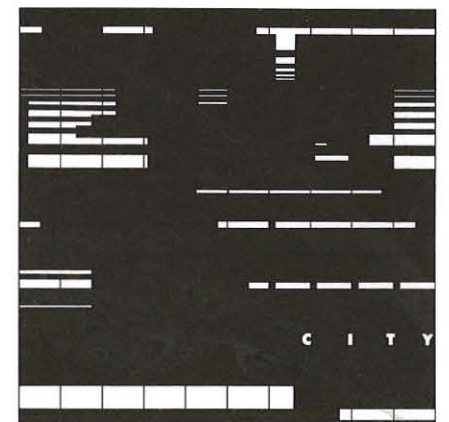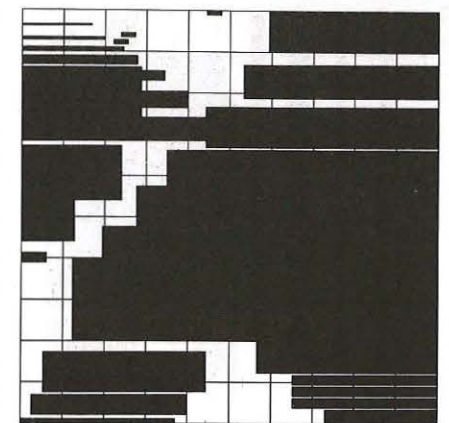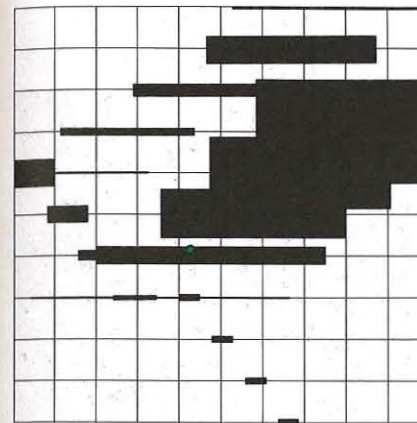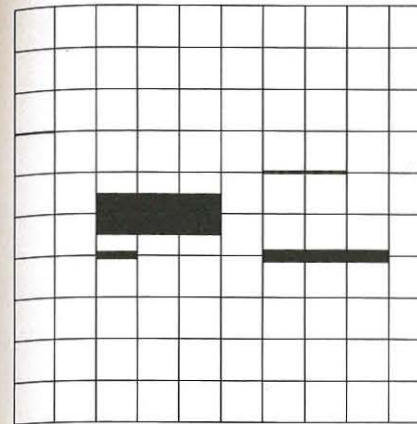
Figure 3

Once a generic operation has been defined, it is used as a point of departure in the remainder of the sequence. It is brought through a process of evolution, destruction or transformation. It is developed into a kind of syntactical visual language which either works with or plays against the given (grid) system. Each image must be individually resolved (internally coherent) and also must be compatible with its neighbors (environmentally coherent).
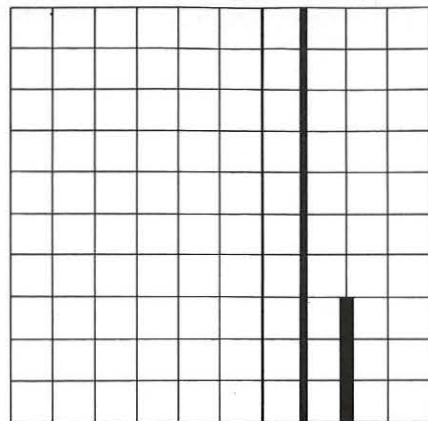
Figure 4

Each sequence ends with a composition which includes the word "city". The input of this element into the exercise adds a semantic dimension. Each student must, in this situation, transcend the purely formal by applying a visual language to a specific meaning. The city images are therefore extensions of each sequence; in some cases, they bring the initial operation to an extreme. In each case, the given line grid is in some way reaffirmed. In every case, the images become symbols for processes of urban organization, planning, renewal or change.
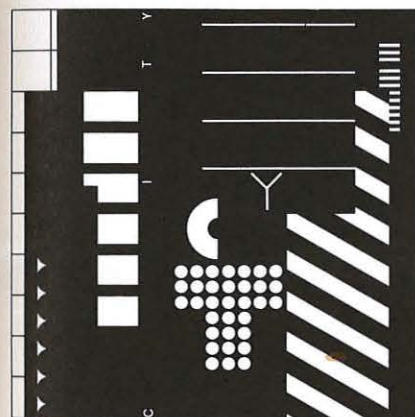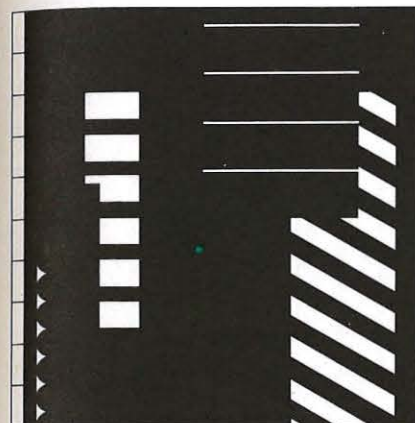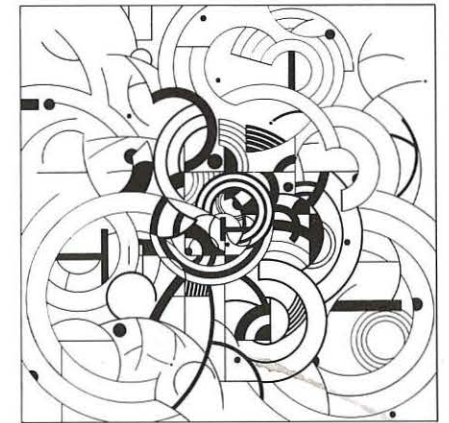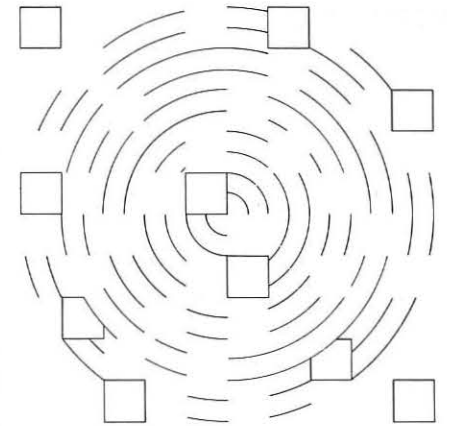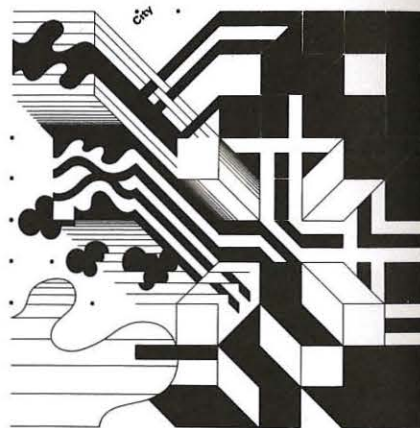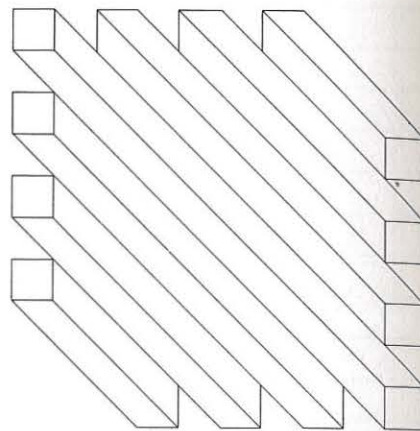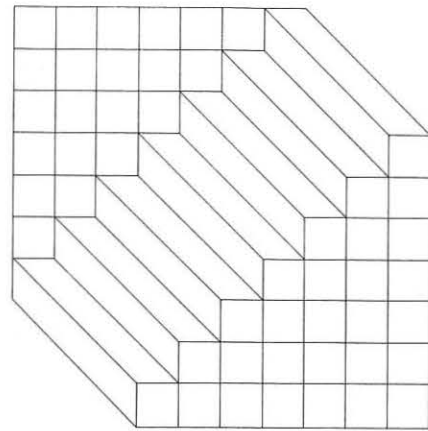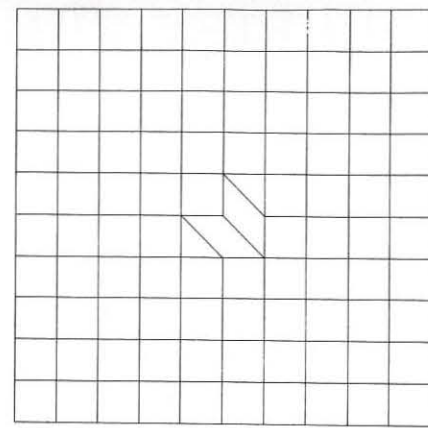
Figure 2

Figure 3

Figure 4

Figure 2

Figure 3

Figure 4

City
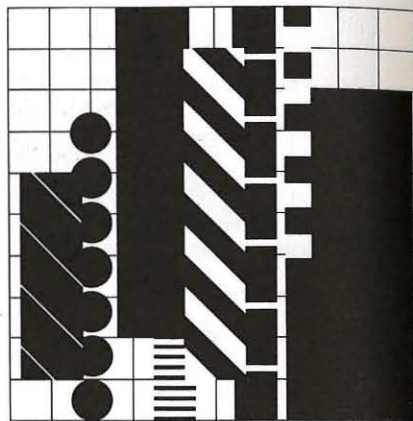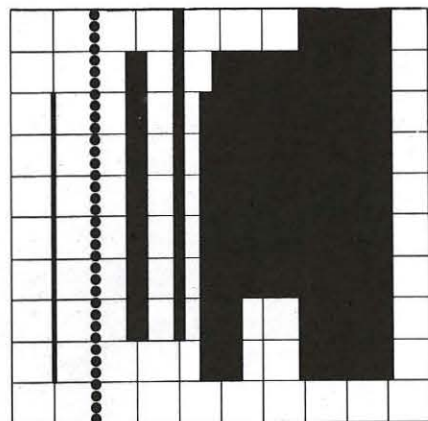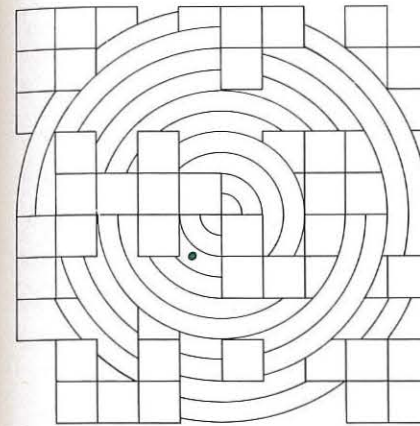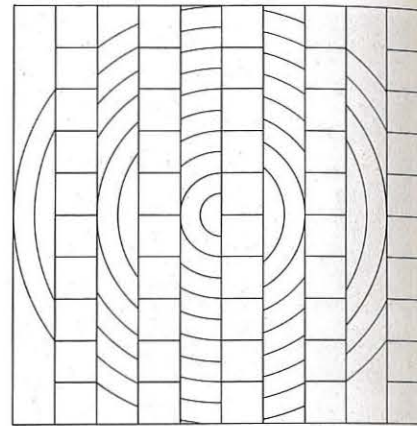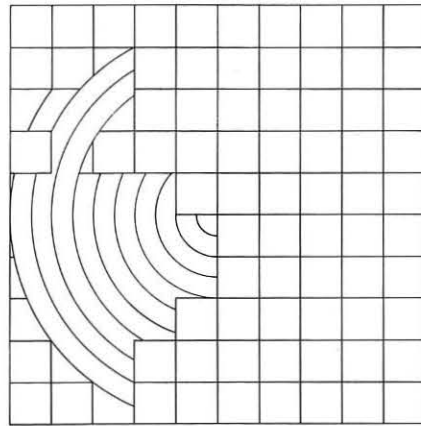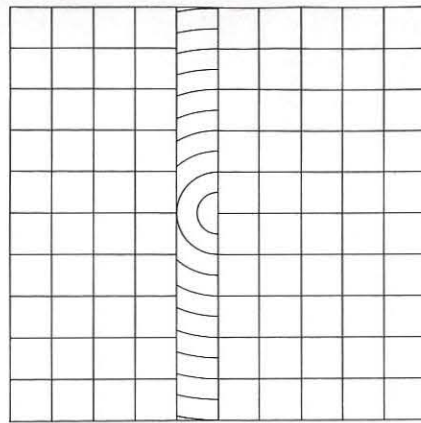
The figures show
student work by:
A Richard Felton
B Kerin Keating
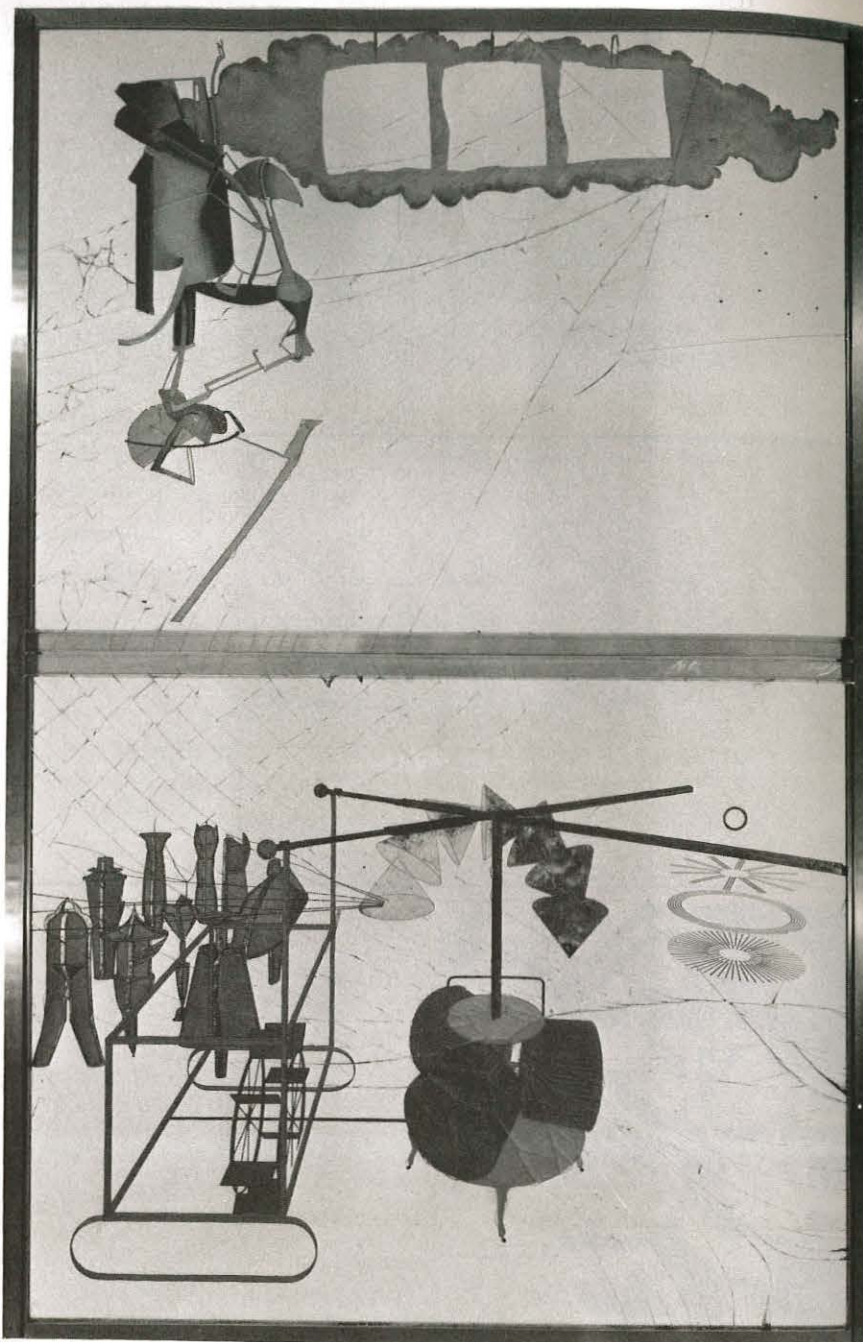C Donald Moyer
D Douglas Scott

Figure 1

Wortgebilde durch Spiel und
Kombinatorik:
Or, Why Duchamp Loved Words
R. C. Kenedy

Due to the needs of a peculiar historical moment, Marcel Duchamp has become
the legendary originator of the present; perhaps not the whole of it, but the best
part of what passes for experimentation. Nothing can diminish his stature in
this respect. His work has survived to supply the stimuli sought by a later
generation of rebels when the more acceptable means of opposition were found
to be either ineffective or exhausted. In this context it is largely irrelevant
whether there is still room for protest by battling against the arts or for
trying to undo societies by whatever faith they may have in their creative impulse.
Bertold Brecht, for one, sought alternative traditions instead of destruction and
he was a no less practised revolutionary than the artist Joseph Beuys; it could
also be argued that Brecht was more urgently motivated than Beuys and that
his ethical fervor pushed him towards sympathies with the morality play as a
logical result of commitment. In the circumstances it seems strange that
Duchamp's fame has reached its apogee through the influence which he exerts.
Strange and possibly unjust as well, because Duchamp's work is antitraditional,
and it is certainly not inspired by pragmatic considerations or by ethical
imperatives.

No man can be utterly exonerated from responsibility for the meaning read
into his work, and it is certainly true that in Duchamp's case his posthumous