

## THE METHODOLOGY OF TYPOGRAPHY TEACHING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

### METODA PREDĂRII TIPOGRAFIEI (GRAFIA ȘI DESIGNUL LITERELOR DE TIPAR) ÎN ÎNVĂȚĂMÂNTUL SUPERIOR

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*The methodology of typography teaching is a relatively new area of graphic design teaching. Typography knowledge has been earlier integrated in the graphic design curricula as a smaller part, and it was not always well delimited within the discipline.*

*The awareness of typography during the last decades has increased thanks to the evolution of the desktop publishing and the technologies specific to the design and the use of typography, in graphic design.*

*What kind of steps must the methodology of typography teaching in higher education include so the awareness of and knowledge about type design and typography can generate better graphic design work..*

**Keywords:** type design, typography, graphic design, typography teaching, fonts, traditions, conventions, typographic narratives, type dialogues, digital literacy.

*Metodologia predării tipografiei (grafia și designul literelor de tipar) este un domeniu relativ nou de predare în cadrul disciplinei de design grafic. Predarea cunoștințelor de tipografie a fost integrată în trecut în programele educaționale de design grafic ca o parte mai mică, și nu întotdeauna bine definită din cadrul disciplinei.*

*Gradul de conștientizare a rolului pe care îl joacă designul literelor și tipografia a crescut în ultimele decenii datorită evoluției desktop publishing și tehnologiilor specifice designului și folosirii tipografiei în designul grafic.*

*Ce fel de pași trebuie să parcurgă metodologia de predare a tipografiei în învățământul superior pentru o mai mare conștientizare a rolului pe care grafia și designul literelor de tipar îl joacă în designul grafic și pentru o mai bună calitate a acestuia.*

**Cuvinte-cheie:** design de litera, tipografie, design grafic, predarea tipografiei, fonturi, tradiții, convenții, povestiri tipografice, dialoguri despre designul literelor, alfabetizare digitală.

Typography teaching in higher education started at Södertörn University, Media Technology Department in spring 2010 with two different courses on two levels: beginners, *Type design and typography*, 7.5 ECT (equivalent to five weeks full-time studies that were taught at half speed) and advanced *Type design and font development* 15 ECT which started one year later in fall 2011. One week full time studies correspond to 1.5 European Credit Transfer, ECT). The courses are afternoon courses in order to also give the possibility for professional graphic designers to attend the courses.

The objective of the course *Typeface Design and Typography* has been to introduce students to the history of typography and font design tools. The advanced course *Typeface Design and Font Development* has been based on knowledge about the impact of technology on the letter shapes and the course curricula focused on type design and development of an own font.

Both the basic course and advanced course collaborated with renowned guest teachers such as professionals from the design studio FamiljenPangea, the typeface designers Fredrik Andersson and Göran Söderström (Sweden), scholars and graphic designers such as Ellen Lupton (USA), Verena Gerlach (Germany), Saku Heinänen (Finland) Gerard Unger (Netherlands/UK). The aim has been to build up competence in Sweden in font design but nevertheless also to increase the understanding of the importance and the role of typography in visual communication and graphic design. Well-trained commissioners, with a deep understanding of type design and typography can enhance the awareness on the market and require more innovative solutions.

### International typography education

At an international level typography education can be found as an integrated part of art and design colleges offering type design courses within their BA or MA programs. There are also institutions where type design studies lead to a specialised degree such as those in *Argentina (Universidad de Buenos Aires)*, *France (École Estienne, Paris, École supérieure d'art et de design, Amiens)* *Germany (Hochschule für Grafik und Buchkunst Leipzig)*, *Mexico (Centro de Estudios Gestalt, Veracruz)*, *The Netherlands (Koninklijke Academie van Beeldende Kunsten [KABK], The Hague)*, *Switzerland (École cantonale d'art de Lausanne [ECAL], Zürcher Hochschule der Künste, [University of the Arts] ZHdK, Zürich)*, *United Kingdom (University of Reading)*, *United States (The Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art)*. The word *typography* (e.g. *tipografie* in Romanian) in the Romance languages describes both type design and the applied art of using letters in graphic design. There is a need for a clearer definition of the term in this context. [1]

### Scandinavian typography education

In Scandinavia the tradition of typography education has been integrated in the tradition of teaching graphic design at the art and design colleges and universities such as *Denmark (Danish School of Media, The Danish Design School, Copenhagen)*, *Finland (Aalto University School of Art and Design, KyAMK, Kymenlaakso University of Applied, Sciences, Helsinki)*, *Iceland (Icelandic Academy of the Arts, Reykjavík)*, *Norway (Gjøvik University College, Oslo National Academy of the Arts)*, and *Sweden (Södertörn University; Konstfack, National College of Arts Crafts and Design, Beckmans School of Design Stockholm; HDK, School of Design and Crafts, Gothenburg)*. The typography courses consist of both *typography (art of using type)* and *type design (art of making type)* classes but goes also further into research as the case of the *Icelandic Research lab in Type and media* at the Icelandic Academy of the Arts in Reykjavík.

The structure of the course Type design and Typography (7,5 European Credit Transfer, ECT)

The course consists of lectures, workshops seminars and computer assisted classes where the students are trained to use digital tools for type design (FontLab Studio) and typography (InDesign).

The main focus of this course on basic level is to introduce the history of type and contextualize the work of type design and typography integration in different applied arts areas. The project will introduce the students to the methodical work of type design.

Lectures role is to increase the awareness of the economical, historical and political influences on the design and use of type. Some lectures are dedicated to guest teachers from the field where they can present their own activity and projects and inspire the students in their own projects.

Assignments for the course are divided into two categories: three smaller assignments corresponding to three weeks full time work (4,5 ECT) and a bigger project that needs two weeks full time work (3 ECT).

### Assignments

The three smaller assignments are *Type analysis*, *Type terminology test*, *Type design workshop*.

Within the project the students will work with the *one word pangram* with the diacritics of the Swedish language (*räksmörgåsen*) in order to give the students the opportunity to encounter and to solve the specific problems of the basic type design issues but also those related specific to the Swedish diacritics. A *pangram* is a holoalphabetic sentence for a given alphabet that uses all the letters in the alphabet at least once. [2]

### Outcomes

After completing the course the student should have the following knowledge, skills and abilities:

- knowledge of the notions of *type design* and *typography*
- basic understanding of the typeface designer working conditions and work processes that a type designer uses

- basic skills in type design and typography
- ability to make qualified assessments of type design and typography
- ability to effectively communicate a message using good typography and elaborated type design
- ability to compare, evaluate and justify solutions in an on going letterpress process
- ability to relate type design and typography to other media technology fields

### **Course literature Type design and Typography (basic level)**

The course literature for the basic level should give a clear historical overview on typography and type design history and introduce and explain the related terminology (Lupton's book). A practical example of orderly type design work (Cheng's book) as well as reference literature on used digital application (Cabarga's book) should also be included in the course literature.

#### *Compulsory literature*

Cheng, Karen; *Designing type*; Yale University Press, 2006

Lupton, Ellen; *Thinking with Type*; Princeton Architectural Press, 2010

Cabarga, Leslie; *Learning FontLab fast*; Iconoclassics, 2004

The structure of the course Type design and Font Development (15 ECT)

The course consists of lectures, workshops seminars and computer assisted classes where the students are mainly trained to use digital tools for type design (FontLab Studio).

The main focus of this course on advanced level is to educate an analytical approach to typography and font design and to increase the understanding of the technology and the aesthetics and design of the font. A new *serif* or *sans serif typeface* will be designed within the course.

Lectures role is to bring perspectives on how type design and customized fonts can raise the standard of the visual communication and communicate in a more subtle way. Some lectures are dedicated to guest teachers from the field where they can present their own activity and projects and inspire the students for their own projects.

### **Assignments**

Assignments for the course are divided into three categories: two smaller assignments (3 ECT) – a type walk through Stockholm and the hand-composition workshop at Skansen – an essay about the impact of technology on type design (4,5 ECT) and a type design project, creating a serif or sans serif font (7,5 ECT).

The hand-composition workshop is organised at the Officina Typographica at the open-air museum of Skansen in Stockholm in order to offer the students a better understanding of the old technology of type setting by working in a XIX century old printing house from Stockholm.

### **Outcomes**

After completing the course the student should have the following knowledge, skills and abilities:

- explain different font technologies
- outline the work processes in type design and font development as a font designer uses and describes the work of a font developer
- apply basic skills in typeface design and font development
- apply font designs and font development in a methodical way
- explain, compare, illustrate solutions in an on going font design
- relate typeface design and font development to other media technology fields

### **Course literature Type design and Font Development (advanced level)**

The course literature for the advanced level should help the student to have a deeper understanding of typography (Bringhurst) and present a good example of methodical type design work (Cheng).

The compendium for this course aims to help students in the process of writing and understanding the evolution of typography and type development through nine different texts written by many well known type designers and historians within the area (Ong, Noordzij, Smeijers, Kinross, Unger, Kostelnick & Hassett, Baines & Haslam, Pohlen).

Also different insights and other experiences from type design and typography education are given through the reference literature (Heller).

#### *Compulsory literature*

Bringhurst, Robert; *The Elements of Typographic Style*; Hartley & Marks Publishers, 2002

Cheng, Karen; *Designing type*; Yale University Press, 2006

*Compendium*; Södertörn University; 2012

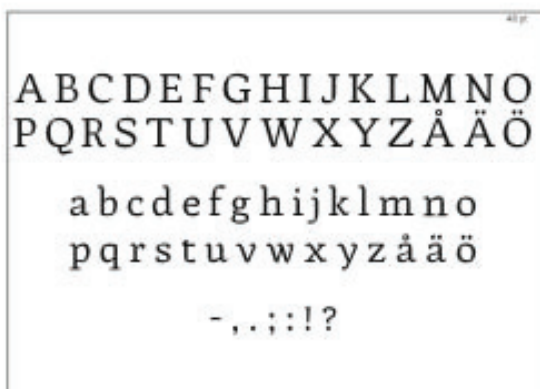
Student work examples

Further on comes some student work examples from 2011

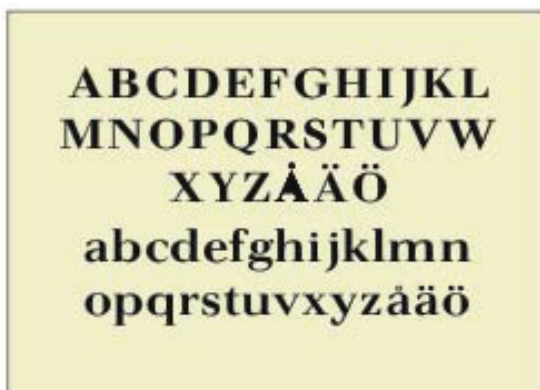
- Type face projects
  1. *Adehsion* by Magnus Holmgren
  2. *Carbo* by Irene Thisner
  3. *Bonitaboluda* by Minerva Pascual
- Type walk reflections
  1. *Hobo* by Magnus Holmgren
  2. *Coffe House* by Torfi Magnusson
- Essays: *The impact of technology on the letter shape*
  1. *Unicode* by Magnus Holmgren
  2. *Stencil* by Ivar Martinsson



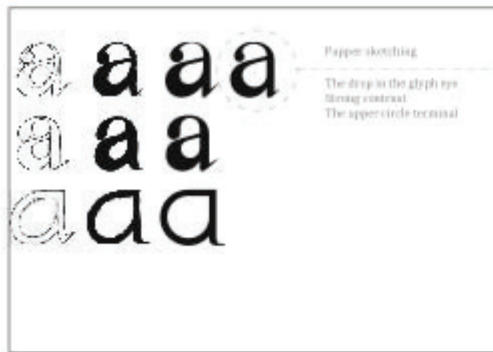
*Adehsion* by Magnus Holmgren



*Carbo* by Irene Thisner







Bonitaboluda by Minerva Pascual

NAGELAKUTEN  
Hörsnäsgränd 122YOGA  
Hörsnäsgränd 122

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SUSHI  
Hörsnäsgränd 122SKO & NYCKELSERVICE  
Hörsnäsgränd 122

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Type walk reflection: Hobo, by Magnus Holmgren



## Bokstavsformer i gatubilden

Det som slår mig när jag går runt på typeswalk i kvarteren runt Rådmanngatan, Sveavägen och Drottninggatan är att **ganska många skyltar är antingen handmalade eller specialdesignade bokstavsformer, dvs ganska många skyltarna verkar inte vara satta i något befintligt typsnitt.**

På typeswalken studerar jag bokstavsformer inom flera olika kategorier som t.ex. skafferi, antikvariat, guldsmide, friluftsliv, läskedrycker m.m. Det finns många intressanta bokstavsformer att välja mellan och till slut bestämmer jag mig för att göra min reflektion på kaffeshandeln Espresso House typsnittsval och kategorin kaffier.

Bland kaffier finns det lite någon dominerande enhetlig stil på bokstavsformerna, men det finns två starka tendenser. Den ena tendensen är större kedjor som ofta går i samerter som t.ex. Wayne's Coffee, Coffeehouse by George, Mullin Bakery m.fl. och den andra tendensen finns hos de mindre kafferna som utmärker sig genom att påfallande ofta ha expressionistiska och unika bokstavsformer i sina logotyper. Denna uppfattning är ganska naturlig då de större kedjorna vill kommunicera att de är pålitliga, är ordningsamma och har hög kvalitet, samtidigt som de mindre kafferna ofta vill framhålla sin personlighet och unicitet.

## Espresso House bokstavsformer

Som en blandning av dessa tendenser framstår då kaffeshandeln Espresso House, som har två olika logotyper som var för sig kan sägas representera de två olika tendenserna inom kaffesegementet. Egentligen har Espresso House bara en logotyp, men på alla sina kaffier framställs företagsnamnet i två helt olika bokstavsformer och för en utomstående framstår det som att de har två olika logotyper. Flera gånger jag såg detta trodde jag att de befann sig mitt i ett byte av logotyp och inte hade hunnit genomföra det ännu på alla sina baren, men så var det inte.

Espresso House har en logotyp i form av en cirkel med namnet satt i antika i versaler som omfattar en kaffeboia. Detta är deras officiella logotyp.



The impact of technology on the letter shape:  
Unicode by Magnus Holmgren



The impact of technology on the letter shape:  
Stencil by Ivar Martinsson



### Conclusions

It is important to increase the understanding of typography and type design as an independent education area offering the students both theoretical approaches to the subject but also practical one. The methodology used should aim on the understanding of the factors that shaped the evolution of type design and typography, stimulate the analytical skills and stimulate the creativity.

Traditions, conventions in typography and type design can be successfully integrated in typographic narratives where the letter shapes create their own dialogue with the viewer and the reader. The increased digital literacy brought along also an increased interest in typography.

Combining lectures, seminars, workshops and design work should give the students a clear overview of the field and help the industry with a higher level of knowledge for both commissioners and designers.

### Bibliographic references

1. WIKIPEDIA *List of institutions offering type design education* [online]. On internet: < [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_institutions\\_offering\\_type\\_design\\_education#Specialized\\_type\\_design\\_degrees](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_institutions_offering_type_design_education#Specialized_type_design_degrees) > 2013-08-25.
2. WIKIPEDIA Pangram [online]. On internet: < <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pangram> > 2013-08-25