

Commentary

Paul Martin Lester, Editor

This is a column I never wanted to write. The reason is not necessarily that I am lazy or that I have other things to do, but Jean Trumbo, a dear friend and a founding member of the social and professional group known respectfully as the “Wild Women of Viscom,” was supposed to do this task. Jean, as of this writing, is rehabilitating. We all wish you a speedy recovery and promise to hold you in our light.

It is also a shame that she didn’t get a chance to write a commen-

tary on typography because she would have done a much better job than I am attempting. For although it was my idea to devote an issue (and, as it turned out, a double issue) of the *Quarterly* to typography, I immediately turned the reins over to Jean to help decide which papers and portfolios should be included and to write this piece. I was looking forward to what she would have to say about typography, a subject and a profession she loves, respects, admires, and uses. With her extensive knowledge of

typography, graphic design, informational graphics, and creative approaches to teaching and communicating, Jean is best qualified to write an opening piece that links those and many other professional fields together. We’ll look forward, no doubt, to her thoughts in the future as she puts them down on paper for us when her “By Design” regular column continues. She did, however, create a typographical piece that might illustrate how she would have begun this special issue:



Conversations. Jean Trumbo. © 2007. Original in color.

“Typography is to writing as soundtracks are to movies.” Jonathan Hoefler

Most of us became curious about reading by being read the words accompanying newspaper funny papers and comic books. But through the typographical choices exhibited within the framed, narrative structures of the cartoons, we also learned how to express ourselves vocally. The contrasts in size and emphasis through mostly miscellaneous type choices taught us how to be expressive humans. And so, it is no small matter to study typography; the field is at the root of who we are as a people.

Jean and I received so many high quality research papers and portfolios that we decided they all could not fit in only 64 pages, and so this double issue is your bounty.

On the Research Side

Many have argued that typography has its roots in writing and that writing can be traced back to the earliest scratches and paintings on walls. Larry Mullen provides a detailed discussion why this link may be justified.

Patsy Watkins makes it clear that typographical and graphic design choices are not made in a cultural vacuum. Designers make choices based on bias and belief and there is no clearer example of that process as when studying various versions of the *Bible*, as she has done for us.

One of the best writers we have in visual communications, Robert L. Craig, continues the historical tour of typography by explaining the impact of art movements on the printed word.

Nigel Holmes, a member of the *Quarterly's* editorial board, is an internationally known innovative leader in graphic design creation. Holmes turns his attention to another innovator, Eric Gill, who invented the elegant typeface known as Gill Sans.

Prabu David and Brian W. Horton write how they inspired their students to unleash their inner creative spirit through the use of a classroom exercise they call, “Font Poems.”

Sheree Josephson, a leader in the field of eye-tracking studies, put her students through a regiment of tests to determine whether a serif or sans serif font is better for legibility on computer screens.

Nigel Holmes and Deni Elliott write illuminating reviews of current books on typography and graphic design with the review section ably edited by Larry Mullen.

Once again, Dennis Dunleavy writes the VizBib section, this time

devoted to typography. Don't miss his image that ends this issue.

On the Pictorial Side

Jaleen Grove, an activist artist from north of the border, contributes her unique eyes and style to the striking cover and in an inside section of her work.

Michael Keegan explains with clear examples the rationale why *The Washington Post* modernized its look through typography.

The impactful poster work of Donald Tarallo is included with other pieces of equally stylistic achievement.

Our own art director, xtine, shows printed bags that were distributed to customers of City Lights bookstore in San Francisco on the day of the 50th anniversary of the publishing of Jack Kerouac's *On the Road*.

Rob Heller, a “Wild Man of Viscom,” gives us an elegantly



whimsical look at all things amper-sand. And why not and?

Dawn Hannah, a Scottish graphic design student lends her slightly bent perspective to the words and

their placement in still and moving video pieces.

The VCQ staff put their heads together and identified some web-sites you should know from the

famous David Carson, Ellen Lupton, and Stefan Sagmeister, but also John Broadley, Susan Farrell, and Evan Roth.



The steady stream of typography. From paintings and carvings on stone surfaces to presentations on computer displays, typography has been a constant of human communication. Left: Eye. London. Top: Vicksburg sidewalk. Mississippi. Above: PowerPoint slide sorter view of a typography lecture. All images © 2007 Paul Martin Lester. Originally in color.

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