

Forum 8

NEWSLETTER OF LETTER EXCHANGE

£3.50 Free to members and associates

Issue 8 September 2004

From the Chairman

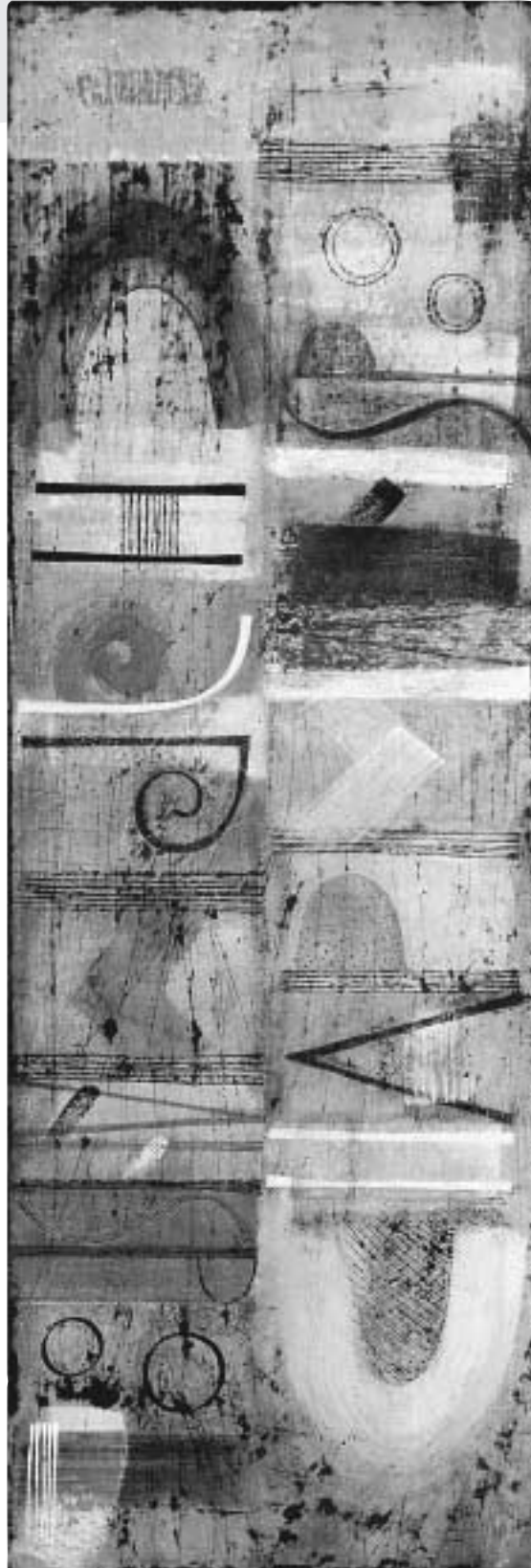
As I write this on our summer break, I can reflect on the past year and consider the events planned for the next. We enjoyed a splendid trip to Rome in May led by Richard Kindersley. Our small party saw all the sights and much beautiful lettering, all fuelled by quantities of delicious Italian *gelati*, *pasta* and *vino*! I hope Gary Breeze's article will inspire you to sign up for our next trip in spring 2005 to Germany.

I'd like to welcome two new Full Members, Margaret Daubney and Charles Smith. Charles is a lettercutter and Margaret a calligrapher who also runs the calligraphy course at Roehampton. We also welcome Catherine Dixon onto the Executive Committee, replacing Dave Farey who has done sterling work during his three-year term. It is with sadness that we learned of the death of Founder Member Bryant Fedden earlier this year. Some of you may remember the splendid alphabet box he exhibited at the tenth Anniversary exhibition. You can read his obituary and that of Jean-Claude Lamborot in this issue.

We always endeavour to find speakers for our lecture meetings who have something to say to all members, and I would very much like to encourage you to come along. Recently I had the privilege of being asked to give a short talk about the relationship between calligraphy and drawing. I mentioned that there were those who thought there wasn't a connection between these two things, and worryingly some of them were calligraphers! There is of course a strong correlation between all art and design and there is always something to learn from those in different disciplines from ourselves. Let's not be confined in boxes marked 'lettercutting', 'calligraphy' or 'type design'. I firmly believe the things we all love about letters apply to all disciplines in the lettering arts and crafts, so come along to the next lecture series because there'll always be fellow professionals to meet and something of interest, even from the most unexpected quarters.

The next one is on 13 October. See you there!

Rachel Yallop *Chairman*



Crafts Study Centre Opens

The new, purpose-built home of the Crafts Study Centre opened in Farnham, Surrey, in June, having moved from the Holburne of Menstrie Museum in Bath, its home from 1977 to 2000. The Centre's collection concentrates on four crafts: ceramics, textiles, lettering and furniture. The bulk of the lettering archive consists of a substantial collection of material by Edward Johnston and Irene Wellington. Margaret Alexander and Graily Hewitt are also represented, as is Heather Child, who was a trustee and responsible for many acquisitions. There are a few pieces each by some fifty more British lettering artists. The bulk of the work is calligraphic, though there is a small number of pieces of stone and rubbings. The new building houses two small galleries, a study room, offices and the collection itself. Items from the collection can be viewed by appointment, and also via the internet. The current exhibition downstairs partially recreates the Centre's first show in 1972, but with new calligraphic/lettering commissions by Ewan Clayton, Thomas Ingmire and Hazel Dolby (see photo). Upstairs, the temporary exhibition gallery at present features ceramics. Five makers were commissioned to produce work for the new building, including Tom Perkins who made two signs and designed the lettering now used as the centre's logo.

Jon Gibbs gives an account of his visit on p8

Hazel Dolby, *Chapman's Pool*, acrylic on tarred rope board, 21½ × 7½ in, 2003; commissioned by Crafts Study Centre and displayed in the Tanner Gallery

Interview Matthew Carter: from Punches to Pixels

Matthew Carter is one of the world's most distinguished type designers, whose work ranges from the ubiquitous computer screen font Verdana to the elegant Galliard. He has lived in the USA for many years, but John Neilson cornered him at the Edward Johnston Foundation Seminar in Sussex in June and got him talking about punch cutting, calligraphy and type design.



Detail from writing book by Charles Snell, 1714, from Ambrose Heal's *The English Writing Masters ...* (1931)

Your father was the typographic historian Harry Carter, so was type 'in the air' as you were growing up?

It certainly was, yes. I wasn't very interested in it as a kid, but the books were around, and of course I met a lot of his friends and colleagues. My dad didn't push me to follow in his footsteps at all. He thought dinner table conversation would be more interesting if I did something completely different... But when I came back from the year I spent at Enschedé's in Haarlem¹, and got my nerve up to tell my parents I didn't want to go to university but wanted to pursue my interest in type instead, then my dad was very supportive. He never taught me in the sense of looking over my shoulder and saying 'I like that' or 'I don't like that', but he opened doors for me, I suppose you could say.

Could you describe that year in Holland?

I had a year to fill between school and university. My poor parents had to think of something to keep me out of the house, so because of my dad's longstanding relationship with Enschedé I went as an unpaid trainee for a year. The idea was to work round all the different departments, but I started in the typefoundry by chance, and got very interested in that, and so virtually the whole of the year I spent in the typefoundry. And then when I went back to England with the intention of reading English at Oxford I found I'd completely lost interest. So what was meant to be a year's interlude before going to university and getting on with the serious business of life actually ended up determining what I've done every day since.

It was punch-cutting?

Oh, absolutely. I sat between Paul Rädisch and Henk Drost, who had been trained by Rädisch. It was Henk who did more of the teaching than Rädisch in practical terms. In a year I obviously didn't learn everything I needed to be a proper punch-cutter, but I achieved some sort of journeyman proficiency. I knew what I was supposed to do; I didn't necessarily have all the skills to do it. But it was a very fascinating year.

Were you working from drawings?

The working method at Enschedé's was that Van Krimpen made relatively small drawings – not as small as Hermann Zapf's – but immaculately produced. These were then reduced to copper line blocks at the correct size for the type, and Rädisch would transfer with candle smoke the image from the block to the surface of the punch. He worked with Van Krimpen's drawing propped up in front of him to refer to. And that's essentially what I did, although I was more concerned with learning how to cut a counter and file the outlines: the mechanics of punch-cutting rather than the interpretation of drawings.

Do you think that influenced you later on in terms of the craft side of letter-making?

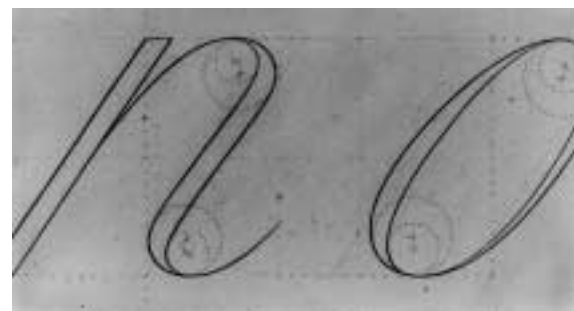
Well I think it had two effects. One is that this was my first face-to-face encounter with letters, and I learnt about them in a manner that made it very expensive to make a mistake. If I'd been working on a punch all day and at knocking-off time I took a chip off a serif, I'd just thrown away a whole day's work. And that teaches you to think long and

LEFT TO RIGHT:

Diagram showing the spacing and joining system of Snell Roundhand, 1966

Four of Carter's drawings for Snell Bold, 1972

Outline of 'a' and names of Carter's two best-known types



Detail from one of Charles Snell's writing books

hard before you commit to doing a letterform: you have to visualise what you're going to do very carefully. I believe that did influence my way of thinking. Nowadays of course the situation is totally different. If you're using a computer you have an 'undo', and there is no penalty for making a mistake. But still, at the end of the day, you as a designer have to develop the judgment about what is and is not a good letter. On the other hand, the very fact that punch-cutting was a difficult thing to do meant that you tended not to experiment very much. It's not a good medium for trial and error. So I have an open mind, and I would never say to students today that they should learn to cut punches because the type they will then design would be better for it.

The other effect is actually something that I'm not conscious of myself, but has been pointed out to me. I don't draw very well, frankly, and so the kind of finish, the edge quality, the smoothness, of the letterforms I make is more like an enlarged punch-cut letter than a highly finished letterform produced on a computer by somebody who really does draw well. I think my 'line' is very much conditioned by my experience of punch-cutting and a sense of tolerance about what is and what is not important about letterforms. If you blew up one of my letters and studied it at large scale where you could really see the details, you might well think the standard of finish was that of a punch. A punch-cutter tries for the best possible finish, but the fact of working at actual size means that realistically speaking the finish can never be that fantastic.



aa Verdana Galliard

Do you see in your mind's eye an absolutely accurate image of the letter that you're going to produce?

Not always. Sometimes I do, but I very seldom produce a perfect letterform first time. Since I don't have to cut punches any longer, and can afford to make mistakes, my design method now is really trial and error. I say to students that the computer's all very well, but it's only there to drive the printer. It is the laser printer that has revolutionised type design, because for the first time in history type designers can see immediately what they're doing. You can put two letters into Fontographer and play them out in combinations from a laser printer, whereas when I started I had to make laborious smoke proofs from punches or, in the days of photocomposition, wait days or weeks before getting trial fonts back from the factory. Digital type was the same in the early days. So I suppose I do try to visualise letterforms, but I've learnt that until I see them come out of the printer I suspend judgment. Although in one sense I work in Fontographer, a huge amount of my work is actually done by dumping proofs out in QuarkXpress and examining them, seeing something I've got wrong, letters too heavy or too light, or the spacing bad. I go back into Fontographer, fix it and print it out again – and get something else wrong. In my Linotype days there were certain rules that designers learnt in the letter drawing office, which were intended to prevent mistakes, but I always refused to learn those rules of thumb. I think there's a danger that you won't investigate something because someone else has told you not to go there. I would rather go there, make the mistake and learn from it myself.

It strikes me that the typefaces you've produced are very different: Video to Galliard to whatever. It's perhaps difficult to ascertain a kind of Matthew Carter style.

It's perfectly true: I can't see any thread that unites Snell Roundhand and Verdana. Somebody once kindly said they thought the letterforms I produce have a bone structure, a backbone, a sort of structural sense. I would be very glad if they did. As a rash generalisation you could say that type designers come in two kinds: in one, their personality shines through every single letter that they make – Fred Goudy, Hermann Zapf, Adrian Frutiger, Gerard Unger – I can tell their work from across the room. Once Gerard and I were talking about collaborating

on a historical revival, doing a Fleischmann face, but Gerard had to admit to me that if he sat down to draw Fleischmann, what came out was Unger! I envy the people who have this designer's genius that informs all of the letters they make. I don't have that: I'm the other kind of type designer, more of a chameleon. I can perhaps more easily get myself in the mood of Fleischmann than would be possible for Gerard or Adrian or Hermann, and that adaptability has been useful to me because of the way I've made my living.

Have you ever designed or wanted to design a type without any prior constraints; without any brief, as it were, simply because you liked the letterforms?

I have done some faces completely off my own bat, like Mantinia and Sophia, but even those were based on models: lettering in paintings and engravings by Mantegna in the case of Mantinia, and Byzantine lettering in the case of Sophia. So even when I don't have a commission, my work tends to refer to something else. If you sat me down on a Monday morning in front of a blank sheet of paper or a blank computer screen, it would be blank on Friday, I assure you! But if somebody said, 'Oh here's a typeface that's a bit too bold' or 'we want it to work on the screen', then by Friday we would have something to look at. I also still relish the 'typefounding' aspect, the technicalities of type: getting different size-related versions of the same family to work well together and so on. All those nitty-gritty things which would drive many designers batty continue to interest me very much. Many of the things I've worked on are like that: practical typefounding more than pure type design.

Faces you've done like Snell Roundhand or Cascade which are calligraphic... do you see them as drawn or outline shapes, or do you see them as pen-made forms?

I see them as outline shapes. I drew them in outline and filled them in with ink. I did get caught up in the italic handwriting revival when I was a schoolboy. It did my penmanship no good really. I'm just not gifted... I have, as the American calligraphers say, no 'fist'. I can see the letter I want to make in my mind's eye, but I can't make the pen go where I want it to go. I threw many pens against the wall in frustration when I was younger. I'm not capable of picking up a pen and making the forms that Charles Snell wrote, or George Shelley, or the other writing masters whose

letters I have adapted as type. So I have to draw them. But it doesn't mean that I don't understand the effect of the pen on the form: many of the characters that are required for the present-day font didn't exist in Snell's day, so in interpreting his work it's necessary to understand the structure in order to provide the missing pieces in a consistent style. I think anyone who deals with letterforms has to have some understanding of the atavistic influence of the pen. I have been accused of being anti-calligraphy, which is not true. Many type designers of course were or are calligraphers. You look at Hermann Zapf and it's inconceivable that his type design could be separated from his calligraphy. When I find a student who draws well or writes well with a pen, I encourage the hell out of them to follow that. But there are a number of type designers, like Zuzana Licko or Gerard Unger or me, who are not calligraphers, and it doesn't seem to be a bar. So I think it's definitely wrong to insist that you must be a calligrapher in order to be a type designer. I know a few people who got interested in type design on the Mac, and then have gone back to an interest in the history of type or in calligraphy. It's nice to think of people discovering letterforms on the computer and then getting sufficiently interested in their origins to cut letters in stone or make letters with a quill pen.

What do you see as the main difference between type design and hand lettering?

As far as I'm concerned there really is only one fundamental difference. If you are doing calligraphy or stone-cutting, you know beforehand what letters you're going to do and in what order. A type designer does not have that opportunity, therefore a type designer's letters have to be randomly combinable in any order, in any language. Calligraphers and stone-cutters have the opportunity to modify letterforms as a function of the context in which they occur. That's really the only difference I see.

Notes

- 1 Joh. Enschedé en Zonen, the distinguished printing firm and foundry, whose chief designer at this time was Jan Van Krimpen. Alan Dodson, John Miles and Carl Dair also spent time there as trainees.

The book Typographically Speaking: The Art of Matthew Carter is reviewed on p13

Quo vadis, John?

Letter Exchange visited Rome in June. A good time was had by all: this is Gary Breeze's account of the trip.

DAY 1: Rome welcomed its pilgrims at 11.35 am on May 21st with a warm embrace and perfect light for four days of studying its inscriptions. From stepping off the plane, not a single poster, sign or door number avoided our scrutiny, and by the early afternoon we were already wandering through the courtyard of the National Museum's newly renovated Epigraphic Collection – the first stop on Richard Kindersley's tightly organized itinerary – oohing and ahing as if we were at a firework display rather than a static collection of monuments. It was here that I hoped to find an inscription mentioning Horace for a friend who has recently retranslated his odes. It had been forty-five years since he had seen it, and he wanted a picture for the book, but nothing had prepared me for the sheer tonnage of stone carving, and I soon had 'lettering blindness'. The Acqua Felice Fountain with its renaissance letters by Luca Horfei; the Santa Maria Maggiore basilica; a fabulous meal; Trajan's column, the Colosseum and the Trevi fountain by night. Two helpings of *gelati* later, I knew this trip wasn't for the faint hearted.

DAY 2 began at the Colosseum (by day) and the Arch of Constantine. If one hasn't been before, it's particularly interesting to see the scale of Roman architecture and carving, and the variety of letterform devised for their specific locations. We were to go through the Forum, but this was shut because of a strike by the attendants. By now, however, we had absorbed something of the Italian temperament and were relaxed enough to wander happily to the next part of the trip, the Piazza del Campidoglio with its second-century bronze of Marcus Aurelius. The Capitoline Museums, which surround the piazza and provide splendid views of the Forum, contain a variety of interesting inscriptions from Greek through Republican and Imperial to early Christian and mediaeval. We discovered a lovely unfinished Imperial 'L' which perfectly demonstrated that the technique of cutting a letter remains unchanged: one could see clear evidence of strong angled chopping combined with more delicate chasing! A quick lunch and we headed for the 2,058 year old bridge, the Ponte Fabricio. It was interesting to see



Unfinished Imperial 'L'

the way the faint Republican inscriptions were imposed in straight lines across its majestic arches, a good indication of how relatively unimportant the lettering was compared to the architecture. On our way to what Richard described as the best *gelati* shop in Rome, we stopped by two churches with inscriptions worth noting. The church of San Giorgio in Velabro and the beautiful little church of Santa Maria in Cosmedin. Though famous for the Mouth of Truth in the portico of Santa Maria, a lovely naive inscription adorns an adjacent wall and the modest jewel-box interior is a little symphony in red oxide and gold. As it happens, the Pantheon is built next to that *gelati* shop, so we were able to spend some time there admiring the Roman talent for both architecture and ice cream in one hit. We had a quick rest in the Piazza Navona, cooled by the waters of Bernini's fountain, and with some 'spare' time in the afternoon, I rushed over to St Peter's to look at the wonderful mosaic lettering (an unbelievable 5ft 1¹/₂ in high) and the bronze doors by Giacomo Manzù: something I had wanted to see for many years.



Stephen Raw making a rubbing of the famous Memorial to the Children of Sextus Pompeius on the Appian Way

DAY 3 proved to be the most epic, or did I start off tired? The groups separated, some of us going to St Peter's and the Vatican museum, and others heading for the Appian Way. The Appian Way was an unexpected delight, stacked with interest for the letterer, but simply beautiful in the spring sunshine. We visited the newly restored tomb of Cæcilia Metella and the church of San Sebastiano, and after a lazy picnic in the Roman countryside a still smaller group of us descended into the catacombs of St Callixtus. A very packed bus (nice to know the Health and Safety people have not reached Rome) took the last of us stragglers to the Piazza del Popolo, with its enormous Egyptian obelisk and Horfei inscription. From there we visited San Giovanni in Laterano with numerous excellent inscriptions in the cloister. Finally we saw the Baker's tomb and the impressive lettering on the aqueduct at Porta Maggiore. We ended day three together, with *gelati* and *grappa*, and I really don't remember much that happened after that!



LEFT TO RIGHT: J Nash, R Yallop, R Kindersley, K Bailey, D Cox, G Breeze, E Hoffnung, S Raw with the Forum in the background

DAY 4: Rain. Those of us less well prepared bought umbrellas from the street vendors who, the day before, had been selling sunglasses, and we splashed our way to the Forum. Taking it in turns to hold brollies over cameras, we carried on regardless, finally ending our tour with a metro ride to view the fascist architecture of the EUR. For our free afternoon we separated into smaller groups to revisit favourite sites. I know Stephen Raw managed to hunt down the fascist mosaics at the Foro Italico, but in spite of a mad dash around the epigraphy collection again, I never did find that lost Horace inscription.

I have many lasting memories of the trip, not least the lively debates: the origin of early Christian letterform and layout was often among them, and Stephen Raw was never far from the centre of an on-running discussion on the precise colour, or absence of colour, used in or on the background of inscriptions. Questions flowed like the springs of the Eternal City itself, but as is the case with the study of epigraphy in general, so much apart from bare historical context was left unanswered. And, like the springs, the unanswerable questions provided a healthy source of refreshment. Everyone came away with the sense that they had journeyed to and found, if not the cradle, then the nursery of Lettering, but that rather than giving us the definitive model, Rome had offered instead a mesmerizing variety of forms from which we could all draw inspiration. Richard constantly encouraged us to be aware of having fixed patterns in our minds regarding letterform, and David Cox told me that he would never listen to pedantry again about the rights or wrongs of a given model.

But perhaps the most frequently asked question was "Where's John?" John Nash had a habit of disappearing, constantly in search of new examples of lettering, but always reappearing unexpectedly to enlighten us with translations of Latin texts or some historical detail.

This was my first visit to Rome and I would say that it was fifteen years too late. It certainly won't be my last. We all thank Richard Kindersley for making it work so perfectly.

Gary Breeze is a lettercarver and full member of Letter Exchange

wwwanderings

Pat Kahn's journey through the web takes her to hypertext, concrete poetry and Devanagari script.

**THE RABBIT-HOLE WENT
STRAIGHT ON LIKE A TUNNEL
FOR SOME WAY, AND THEN DIPPED
SUDDENLY DOWN, SO SUDDENLY THAT
ALICE HAD NOT A MOMENT TO THINK ABOUT
STOPPING HERSELF BEFORE SHE FOUND HERSELF
FALLING DOWN A VERY DEEP WELL.**

Alice in Wonderland, chapter 1

Hypertext: 4d and more

Hypertext is a network of linked documents. Its roots are old: there are rich traditions, in manuscripts and printed books, of commentaries-on-commentaries, of annotated text – including the plain old footnote – that heads you off somewhere else. But before the internet, getting to associated texts had to happen at reading or walking speed – in a library, personal or public, or with the aid of a card catalogue, driven by memory and footwork, or the thread of accidental association. Chance and game theory crops up in writers from Cage to Calvino. But with the internet it's part of the reading experience. Authors and creators can plan links, but the internet is arguably a hypertext machine – with all material, by accident or design, a click away.

www.lcdf.org/indeterminacy/index.cgi

John Cage's stories are perfect for random linking. This has a pleasingly plain interface after the watercoloured opening page. Droll tales from the granddaddy explorer of chance operations with his usual cast of characters – himself, Merce Cunningham, David Tudor, *et al* – are linked one to the next by asterisk, or sequentially by number.

www.sfu.ca/~okeefe/Shadow%20Box/shadowbox.html

A seductive opening page – a grid of old illustrated book pages, a dancing figure. Wunderkammer links it to the next site.

www.ineradicablestain.com/stain.html

Shelly Jackson's writing page – 'Skin' takes the text substrate idea somewhere else. But the writing link

www.ineradicablestain.com/writing.html leads to 'the body'

www.altx.com/thebody/body.html

interconnected musings on her anatomical theme, effectively combining strong illustrations with simple text presentation.

www.futureofthebook.com/storiestoc/

A list of essays on varieties of form of text and reading.

www.enarrative.org/reading.html

www.grendel.org/hunter/enarrative2/

These are lists of links, before and after a 2001 conference, to sites that play with the form of text and reading, and essays that consider how this works or what it means. Hypertext is highly diverse and idiosyncratic – the first site helpfully opens new windows on Moholy-Nagy, a BBC poetry site I wouldn't

have otherwise known to look for, and other experiments including Deathlife featured in the last *Forum*. Some will require software you don't want to download, some are too big for dial-up connections or too navel-gazing or too weird for some tastes or moods. Most will lead elsewhere if you're interested. Some sites have moved – try googling for new addresses. See Google below.

Other sites for hypertext include:

www.desvirtual.com/thebook/english/bula.htm

www.eastgate.com/Hypertext.html

www.poemsthatgo.com/

The archive interface

www.poemsthatgo.com/gallery/index.htm

is nicely designed – lists software requirements and download size.

trace.ntu.ac.uk/frame/

www.HypertextKitchen.com

www.rhizomes.net

www.altx.com

www.keithsmithbooks.com/mybooks.htm

from an established writer of manuals on bookbinding, including two [printed] classics on book form: *Text in the book format*, and *The structure of the visual book*.

www.google.com

It's arguable that the internet *is* hypertext.

For internetophobes, Google is a search engine, a device which trawls the web and gives you addresses of web documents in response to your chosen words. It's so key to the enterprise that *googling* has become a verb. Document listing is not, on the whole, driven by commercial input, which distinguishes Google from other search engines.

A question: how do we track our routes on the web, if sequence and the process of locating are important to the process of understanding and remembering? There are two related questions: how do we know where we are, and how do we remember how we got there? I hope someone's studying this. Have any of you discovered ways that work? I've tried saving history pages, but found I rarely looked at them later. I label extracted texts with their urls – the document address – but sometimes the chain is interesting or suggestive, and that's harder to usefully archive and retrieve.

Concrete poetry

The visual form of text can be explicitly expressive of its meaning. There have been experiments since manuscript days, then Apollinaire and the Russian constructivists, and then mid-20th century 'concrete poetry' by writers themselves. Now that technology facilitates combining roles of writer and designer, experiments proliferate – sometimes with moving text, with sound, or both.

www.ubu.com

If you haven't already looked, the root site of Dreamlife (*Forum 7*) is a rich resource on concrete and visual poetry – historical and contemporary, and sound art. Examples of the form and critical texts.



Image from Shelly Jackson's site
www.altx.com/thebody/body.html

www.poemsthatgo.com/gallery/winter2004/print_article.htm

The current issue, still online in July, is on 'text, time, typography'. The opening essay is a brief historical account of concrete poetry, with good links at the end.

Don't miss

www.yhchang.com/BETTY_NKOMO.html

A plain and wild little type-movie-poem, with music – and their other work at the root url. One of the links is an extensive list of links to online concrete poems:

www.gardendigest.com/concrete/concr1.htm

Devanagari: stroke order on the web

All that formal experiment: what's it for? I hear you ask. Play is great, for a break, or in suggesting different ways of putting things together. But sometimes you find something that's well made and useful. Here's a demo of Devanagari, the alphabet used for Sanskrit and Hindi:

<http://asianstudies.anu.edu.au/hindi/alphabet/>

It's not only writing – a nifty unwordy presentation of stroke order – but pronunciation too. I love the categories, which must be familiar to those who know about spoken language rather than its written form: consonants – velar, palatal, retroflex, dental and labial; semi-vowels and sibilants. Some of the issues of presenting Sanskrit on the web are described on the f.a.q. for Sanskrit documents;

<http://sanskrit.gde.to/sanskritfaq.html>

Compare some other interfaces:

<http://www.avashy.com/hindiscripttutor.htm>

writing and sound separate, male and female voices, notes.

<http://members.tripod.com/sarasvati/devanagari/alphabets.html>

just writing, no sound.

<http://www.bharatdarshan.co.nz/hinditeacher/main.htm>

this only partly works, or maybe it's for PCs only, or needs an add-on I don't have.

<http://faculty.maxwell.syr.edu/jishnu/101/alphabet/>

crude but graphic stroke order demo, nice use of colour.

<http://sanskrit.gde.to/marathi/alphabet.html>

English characters with sound, presumably Devanagari if you download the programme. If any calligraphers master Flash, or decide they want to pal up with suitable software techies, online teaching of calligraphy might come to life.

Some Notes on the Design and Illustration of Manuscript Books

Edward Wates

For Edward Johnston, 'the making of manuscript books... is the best means of mastering the foundations of book typography and decoration'¹. While this is certainly one outcome, in truth the functional requirements for manuscript books have almost entirely disappeared. In many cases, the only justification for the manuscript book consists in the pleasure of its making, and in the pleasure of those few who might respond to its form and content. But the manuscript book does provide an opportunity for a more expressive or experimental approach than is possible within the mechanical constraints of type; and more interestingly, perhaps, its creation can involve an extended meditation – for both scribe and reader – on a text that may be too long or otherwise unsuitable for broadsheet calligraphic presentation.

Much of book design – whether printed or written – involves the treatment of text and illustration. In the printed book, almost any style of illustration (provided it has been competently executed) can be made to sit happily with type. The primary challenges to the book typographer have more to do with legibility, with clear sign-posting and with practical considerations such as page make-up than with aesthetic questions of style. Of course it is important to satisfy the formal principles of book design, but with minor adjustments the same typography could be used for a book of fine art reproductions as for technical scientific illustrations.

The manuscript book, on the other hand, poses particular kinds of challenges. The fact that both lettering and illustration may be by the same hand raises questions of style, while providing the opportunity for a more unified and integrated approach than is readily available for the printed book. And to borrow a phrase from John Ryder in a slightly different context, 'it is... on the amateur's workbench (a place from which the time-sheet and the wage-bill are absent), that experiments can be made and repeated without end and without fear of bankruptcy.'²

There are probably as many approaches to this challenge as there are individuals. In the notes that follow, I look at two personal sources of inspiration, and conclude with an example of my own.

Edward Wates's 'day job' is as UK Journal Production Director for Blackwell Publishing. He is also chair of the Irene Wellington Educational Trust. There will be an exhibition of handwritten and small press books in Oxfordshire in December: see p14

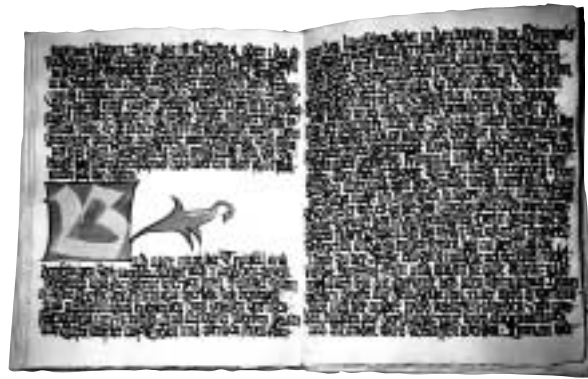


FIG 1: Rudolf Koch, *Evangelium Mattheus*, early 1921. Initial in yellow on a panel with purple, green, red and grey sections, page size: 253 × 203 mm



FIG 2: H-J Burgert, *Die Nachmittagssonne von Adalbert Stifter*, 1992. Handwritten printed book, 28 pp, page size: 297 × 210 mm

Rudolf Koch

Much of the power of Koch's work stems from the strength of his religious conviction, as well as his experience as a soldier in the First World War. Like all authentic expression, his work points somehow beyond itself. You have to hold these books in your hand to appreciate to the full the conviction that has gone into their making – the text is written with an urgency that suggests that the physical act of writing was more important than the outcome. Even in reproduction, it is apparent that these manuscript books are the product of a certain kind of emotional or spiritual compulsion that transcends mere technique.

The effect is achieved in the handwritten gospels by an apparent disregard for conventional margins, with the writing occupying the entire area of the page. However, despite the compelling texture of the black writing shown in Fig. 1, the overall effect would be completely different without that large initial 'B', the space beside it, and the odd device that extends into the area between the paragraphs. Here the graphic device achieves a visual contrast with the dense texture of the writing that surrounds it. It also serves to create a kind of mental space, an opportunity for the reader to step back from the intensity of thought and emotion that the physical nature of the text conveys.

What I particularly appreciate about Koch's work is how 'anti-precious' it is. The paper is often dog-eared, torn in places, and distinctly grubby. Whether this was intentional at the outset or not, it is clear that the books have

been handled frequently and have not been treated as precious objects. It seems to me that they were created under a kind of imperative, and then – with the generosity of a true maker – invested with a life of their own.

Hans-Joachim Burgert

Professor H-J Burgert has also written about the influence of Rudolf Koch. For Burgert the challenge for calligraphy is similarly to find a suitable formal vehicle for the expression of an emotional response to texts of personal significance. Over the years he has evolved a style in which lettering and illustration have become fully integrated. For him, the individual qualities that the hand brings to the letter are more important than the technical perfection of the marks:

Calligraphic perfection is an interior perfection: the perfect composition of masses of marks, the perfect expression of living being. One should be able to see that the work is the product of a human being rather than a machine. Repetition and precision are not the goal. The calligrapher strives to express emotion in form.³

For Burgert, 'calligraphers have not given sufficient thought or energy to learning to "think in" graphic form, to developing a calligraphy that is a two-dimensional graphic language'. For him, the main element in modern calligraphy should be the stroke, which leads to linear compositions, and in which lies the defining characteristic of the

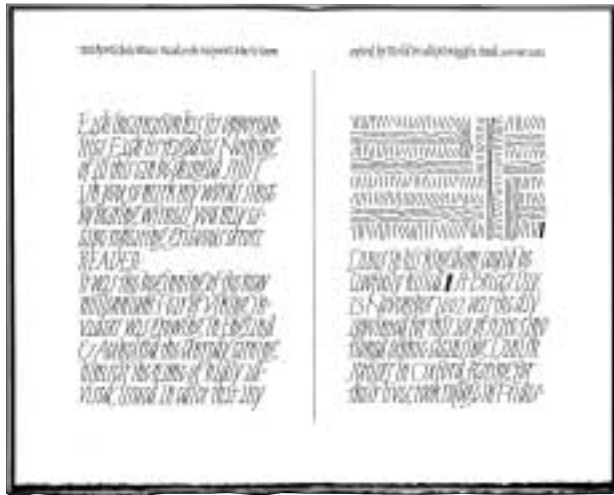


FIG 3: Edward Wates, *Frideswide: Strong Peace* by Michele Wates, 2002. Handwritten MS book in black gouache, 4 pp, page size: 297 × 190 mm

art form. The same principles underpin the style of his lettering as lie behind his drawn forms (Burgert does not use the term 'illustration'). In this sense, the two elements form one harmonious whole rather than a connection of two discrete entities.

The effect can be seen in Fig. 2. Here, the writing consists of interlocking ribbons of text with a slight forward motion punctuated by the ascenders and descenders that interrupt the horizontal flow. The rhythmic pattern of the cursive text block is established in contrast to the white space of the page, and in this case the wide head margin is to be noted. Meanwhile, the physical boundary between lettering and graphic is blurred as the writing literally extends into the image area and vice versa. The graphics are formed using the same weight of line as in the text, while cross-hatching is used to provide contrast with the areas of white enclosed within the shapes. The overall page achieves a compelling unity with an almost minimalist economy of means.

'Frideswide: Strong Peace'

In my own written work, I have tended towards vertical pages that demand a degree of lateral compression of the letterform in order to fit a decent number of words into a line. Without the constraints of press and sheet size that govern the format of printed books, there is scope for the handmade book to explore those proportions that seem intuitively pleasing. When analysed, it becomes apparent that these proportions are based not only on geometry, but also on the structures of the natural world, music as well as ancient manmade constructions. (For an excellent discussion, see Note 4.)

The textblock then forms a rhythmic pattern in contrast to the areas of white space created by the margins. This pattern is repeated page after page, and the cumulative effect of this repetition is somehow more than the sum of the parts. But the writing on its own can be monotonous, so elements of contrast and mental resting space help to break the routine. I find I am resistant to using contrasting sizes of lettering – partly because I believe the emphasis this imposes can be arbitrary in relation to the meaning of

the text, but also because this kind of treatment interferes with the rhythmic pattern I am more interested in. The element of contrast must then be achieved by means of a graphic element of some kind.

The text for the book shown in Fig. 3 was written by Michele Wates in commemoration of the thousandth anniversary of a little-known massacre of the Danish population of Oxford that took place in 1002. I wrote the book out and made a small number of photocopies on good paper to be sold as part of a benefit reading in aid of Amnesty that took place at the Holywell Music Rooms in November 2002. The inspiration for the graphic element shown on the right-hand page came from frequent aeroplane flights, looking down on the smoothed contours of the flatlands below. It has something to do with Oxford's setting on the confluence of a number of rivers, the flight of the Danish population to St Frideswide's Church, and the physical disjunction of the massacre itself.

Conclusion

There is something innately satisfying about the physical nature of the book – the tactile quality of paper and binding, the way it sits comfortably in the hand and pleases the eye. Furthermore, the book provides access to that intimate dialogue between author and reader, an entry point to the world of ideas and the imagination, and contains within its modest form the power to seduce or inspire, entertain or instruct. Even in the internet age, the pleasures of reading continue to be enjoyed by many, while the handmade object can be seen as an expression of the human soul in a world of mass production.

Notes

- 1 Edward Johnston. *Writing & Illuminating, & Lettering*, London: Pitman, 1906, chapter 6.
- 2 John Ryder. *Printing for Pleasure*, 2nd edn, London: Bodley Head, 1976, p 88.
- 3 Hans-Joachim Burgert. *The Calligraphic Line*, 2nd edn, Berlin: Burgert Handpresse, 2002, p 93.
- 4 Robert Bringhurst. *The Elements of Typographic Style*, 2nd edn, Washington: Hartley & Marks, 1996.

Letters

Forum welcomes letters from readers, whether members or not. Please send them to the editor (see back page).

Many thanks for mentioning the proposed one-year letter carving course at the City and Guilds of London Art School in the last issue of Forum (No. 7, *Clippings*). We would like to hear from anyone who might be interested in attending such a course, which would aim to be both practical and inspirational. Students would have access to all the School's resources, eg. print room, drawing room, library, etc. (For more information about the School, please visit their website: www.cityandguildsartschool.ac.uk.) Comments and suggestions also welcome – if we are successful in establishing such a course, we feel that it is very important to put together a programme which responds directly to the specific needs and interests of the potential students. Responses please to: The Memorial Arts Charity, Snape Priory, Snape, Suffolk, IP17 1SA, tel: 01728 688934, email: clare@memorialartscharity.org.uk, website: www.memorialartscharity.org.uk.

Clare Austyn

Letter Exchange lectures 2004-5

Everyone is welcome, including non-members. Lectures are on Wednesdays at 6.30pm prompt at:

The Art Workers Guild, 6 Queen Square, London WC1N 3AR

£5 members, £7 non-members, £3 students, payable at door

Fuller details on poster and flyers

2004

13 October Annetta Hoffnung
The Humour of Gerard Hoffnung

17 November
Visit to Richard Kindersley's Studio

16 December Rachel Yallop
Taking a Line for a Walk
plus Christmas Party

2005

12 January John Miles
Royal Mail – Lettering as Symbol

16 February Harriet Frazer
'I'd never heard of Eric Gill...'

16 March Phil Surey
The Signwriter's Tale

27 April Werner Schneider *Lettering Artist and Type Designer*

18 May Gerald Fleuss
The Edward Johnston Foundation

15 June Alan Fletcher
Stuff & Non-Sense

The Word in Landscape

Roche Court, Wiltshire, has one of Britain's most important changing collections of modern sculpture. The curator, Helen Waters, who spoke to Letter Exchange in May, outlines the place of lettering there.

Roche Court, the home of Madeleine Bessborough, is set in the beautiful Wiltshire landscape about twenty minutes' drive from Stonehenge. The house was built in 1804 for Lord Nelson although he never lived there. Our aim is to show contemporary art in an 'art historical' context, so we try and show work by every generation from 1950 to the present day. We represent the Barbara Hepworth Estate. We don't receive any public funding, relying on sales of artwork to fund what we do. The sculpture park is open seven days a week, all year round.

Why is there so much lettering at Roche Court? Before moving here in the late 70s, Madeleine and her family lived at Castle Mary in County Cork. Their near neighbours were René Hague and his wife, Joan, Eric Gill's daughter, and Madeleine was always fascinated by the Gill memorabilia in their rambling Irish rectory: there were fragments of lettering carved in stone and inscribed on textile. She showed Gill and David Jones's work in her Sloane Street gallery which she



Richard Kindersley's Millennium Stones in 2001, with a Barbara Hepworth piece in the background

opened in 1957. At that time she was also a close friend of Ken Thompson, now probably the most famous letter cutter in Ireland. René had been tremendously influenced by his father-in-law and in the 70s produced some beautiful lettered blinds for Madeleine based on the story of the fall of Troy. He inscribed the text, his own words, in diluted oil paint on parchment blinds.

Roche Court offers a variety of settings for the sculpture, from shady wooded areas to open parkland. Next to the main house is the glass-fronted gallery we built in 1998, and which provides a wonderful space for our temporary exhibitions. Most of the letter cutting is in the former walled kitchen garden. It is an enclosed, intimate space which encourages contemplation and reflection. We never let an artwork stay in one place for too long, but often change its

context, which I find changes the reading of it. This happens especially with lettering, when one cannot help relating the words to their surroundings.

We are very privileged to work with a number of letterers in this country, including Richard Kindersley, Gary Breeze, Richard Devereux, Martin Jennings, John Das Gupta, Luke Dickinson, Anna Johansen, Ralph Beyer, Belinda Eade, Meical Watts, John Neilson, Kate Owen and Incisive Letterwork. In 2001 we exhibited Richard Kindersley's *Millennium Stones* in the Sculpture Park. Henry Moore said of his own open air pieces that 'they possess their environment', and this is also true, I believe, of the *Millennium Stones*. For the opening of the installation we invited the actress Jill Balcon to read the texts from the middle of the stone circle. This interaction between written and spoken word was an incredibly important moment.

In 2002, an exhibition of lettering by Gary Breeze was the inspiration behind another educational event at Roche – our first annual schools competition. Interested in society's preconceptions about culture and the way things are sublimated by the passage of time, Gary turned the tables on history by translating lyrics from popular songs including *Singing in the Rain* into Latin. The four finished panels of Portland Limestone were displayed in our early nineteenth century summerhouse. We invited the pupils of our member schools to select a lyric from their favourite pop song, translate it into Latin and then set it out in a design to be inscribed. We had a huge number of entries. The winning one was cut into stone by Gary and presented to the winning school. We are looking forward to working with Gary this autumn when his exhibition *Musæum* opens in November [see *Forthcoming Events*, p14 – Ed.]. One piece of Gary's is permanently installed in the courtyard outside our Artist's House. *Castle Mary* was commissioned by Madeleine. It is textual map of where she used to live in Ireland showing the relationship of all the fields, parks and woods. It is more than an inscription – it is a topographical picture, a map of words – and it is much loved by our visitors, and especially by Madeleine. It is a reminder of her past, but installed in her present.

Upon Reflection is a new work by sculptor William Pye: the word REFLECT is to be sited in the middle of a lake, not only as an invitation but a description: the landscape surrounding the work is reflected back at the visitor, who is encouraged by the stillness of the water to contemplate. Words have this power to make one stop and think, pause and reflect – and learn. I hope that we will continue to include them in the landscape of Roche Court.

Roche Court, E Winterslow, Salisbury, Wilts SP5 1BG
t: 01980 862244
www.sculpture.uk.com

Meaningless Marks?

Jon Gibbs's visit to the new Crafts Study Centre provokes thoughts on the direction of calligraphy



Entrance to the Crafts Study Centre with Tom Perkins's sign

The entrance to the new Crafts Study Centre in Falkner Road, Farnham, Surrey is flanked by two large upright bunches of withies, accompanied by two low, undulating, loosely woven forms along the ground. This may be a representation of the craft of weaving which was a prime concern of one of the founders, Robin Tanner, back in 1977. Alongside is a standing stone of Welsh slate with an inscription which is unmistakably Tom Perkins's work. I doubt this juxtaposition is intentionally ironic, but that is how it struck me. There is an obvious link between the etymology of woven 'textile' and written 'text', but there is a marked dichotomy between a ragged, relatively unstructured natural material and a highly finished, finely drawn and crafted exposition of humankind's most influential creation, alphabetic language.

The Centre is now part of Surrey University's Institute of Art & Design (formerly Farnham School of Art). It holds collections of twentieth century textiles, pottery, furniture, lettering and relevant archival materials. Lettering arrived late at the party with the donation of a quantity of items from the estates of Edward Johnston and Irene Wellington. Prof. Simon Olding, the recently appointed Director, is hopeful that a more representative collection of modern lettering can be added to flesh out the Johnston/Wellington skeleton. When I trawled through the 682 items in the online archive (www.ahds.org.uk), it became immediately apparent that there was very little other than work by these two seminal figures, and almost nothing other than calligraphy. Having been contacted several months earlier by a staff researcher as to the whereabouts of William Sharpington's copyright owners, I hoped there might be a reasonable amount of work by this influential signwriter. There are just two items: an alphabet exemplar on paper and a jocular adage painted on an oak panel. So to discover more about the work of Johnston and Wellington, this is the place to look; for anyone else I would suggest that the National Art Library/V&A museum is a more fruitful resource, albeit a pain to access. The online resource is excellent as a quick way of finding what is held on site, though the

images are at too low a resolution to enable meaningful inspection.

The Centre has been purpose built and incorporates two galleries. The 'Tanner Gallery' on the ground floor houses examples from the permanent collection. The lettering work is shown in a long, glass-topped, specially made display case which currently has items by Johnston and Wellington together with some specially commissioned pieces by Ewan Clayton and Thomas Ingmire. Hanging on an adjacent wall are two pieces by Hazel Dolby [see front page – Ed], which in my humble opinion are the stars of the show, and which made the 400 mile round trip worthwhile.

Ewan Clayton's essay in the book marking the opening of the Centre has an illustration of a work by Ingmire, partly in the form of a diary, in which he quotes the postmodernist critic Roland Barthes as saying 'for writing to be manifest in its truth (and not its instrumentality) it must be illegible'. I draw attention to this because earlier I had asked Prof. Olding for his opinion on illegible calligraphy. His tactful response suggested that this was perhaps the way contemporary scribes were moving the craft forward. In my view this is a debate which ought to be aired in the columns of *Forum*. There is a continuum in the history of civilisation and society during which marks have evolved from figurative images through the familiar path of ideo- and phonograms into abstract symbols representing sounds and culminating in alphabetic language systems. This journey is, to my mind, the defining achievement of the human race: the means by which history is recorded, culture recognised and celebrated, and the future predicted or prophesied. To imagine that meaningless marks are the way forward is to misunderstand the value of calligraphy and lettering. Illegible marks may have value in understanding the physiology and/or psychology of mark-making, but by definition they aren't calligraphy or lettering. Both of these activities involve the clarification, refinement and enhancement of letters, which in turn become even more valuable when conjoined into meaningful words. I hope the Crafts Study Centre will publish Ingmire's thoughts in an accessible form. Likewise Clayton's work which is also a combination of calligraphy and squiggles. My understanding of postmodernism is that it is a rejection of previously accepted 'metanarratives'. Presumably legibility is regarded as such, but I would like one of the postmodern proselytisers to explain to those of us whose brain is less than the size of Belgium why illegibility is the future. If this can be done in simple clear English, without the psycho-babble jargon which is the hiding place of so many art critics, I for one will be eternally grateful.

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Obituaries

Bryant Fedden

Bryant Fedden, sculptor, letter carver and founder-member of Letter Exchange, has died, aged 72. Bryant had a distinctive style of carving which combined sureness of form and confident craftsmanship with a lightness of touch, and often a playfulness and sense of humour. But he will also be remembered for his generosity, and for the role he played in encouraging and shaping the development of other artists and craftspeople through the workshops he established at Winchcombe and in the Forest of Dean.

Bryant was interested in sculpting from an early age. He was encouraged by his teacher at Bryanston School, Donald Potter, who had worked under Eric Gill. Following National Service in Nigeria he went up to Cambridge to read History and English. It was at Cambridge that he met Kate who was to become his wife. Together they spent much of their time there sculpting. This was the start of a life-long partnership in which living and working together went hand in hand. After graduating, Bryant spent a year serving a kind of apprenticeship, working in mason's yards and developing his making skills. There followed a rather disheartening year training with an advertising agency as an account executive. In 1955 he and Kate married, and having decided that he wasn't cut out for advertising, they went off to teach in Pakistan for the next three years. This was followed by a spell teaching at Gordonstoun School. During all this time Bryant continued to carve, and in 1961 decided that it was time to commit himself to working as an artist. He and Kate made a conscious decision to work away from London and settled, now with two babies, in Toddington in Gloucestershire – in fairly primitive conditions.

In 1962 Bryant joined the Gloucestershire Guild of Craftsmen. Theo Moorman, who joined shortly afterwards, gave him lasting inspiration with her uncompromising and perfectionist attitude to her work. Another member of the Guild was Ray Finch, whose Winchcombe pottery was nearby and whose mode of life and work was a model and constant source of encouragement. Bryant maintained a close connection with the Guild for the rest of his working life.

For some years Bryant, along with Theo, had been involved in the early formation of the Crafts Council. After the ousting of the then director, Cyril Wood, Bryant realised that he had no taste for such politicking, and his commitment to a way of life focused on a more intimate conception of community and to 'making good things' was confirmed.

In 1966 the family moved to Winchcombe and set up the Tanyard Bank workshops. By this time Keith Jameson had joined Bryant in the workshop. Keith came as Bryant's assistant, but the working relationship was reciprocal. This was to set the collaborative style of the workshops for the future.

During this period Bryant began to carve directly into the stone, using only basic chalk-drawn shapes as guides, and allowing the carving to shape the final balance and form of the lettering. Bryant was also engraving and



Bryant Fedden in his workshop

learning to blow glass. Larger orders for glass commissions became opportunities for collaborations between Kate and Bryant. In 1981 he became the glass artist in residence at Sunderland Art College. While in the North East he met and became close friends with Li Yuan Chia, the Chinese artist who created and ran the extraordinary LYC Gallery at Bampton on Hadrian's Wall. When Li died in 1994 Bryant carved a tall piece of local red sandstone stone inscribed with his Time-Life-Space emblem to mark his grave in Lanercost Abbey.

The workshop expanded again in 1990 when Bryant and Kate left Winchcombe to be near their daughter and grandchildren in the Forest of Dean. New workshops were built for his artist-blacksmith son and furniture maker son-in-law. Bryant's own pieces during this period exude a new confidence: sculpture using lettering in a free and playful way that demonstrate a real harmony between form, sound and meaning. This period with its public art opportunities expanded the range of collaborative work. Exciting public commissions during the 1990s included text signage and seating for Walsall railway station, seating for Hunstanton sea front, and a seat and text for Chipping Camden library. By 2001 Bryant was experimenting with stainless steel lettering cut by water jet into paving.

The population of the workshops always fluctuated, with assistants coming and going and other artists and makers temporarily occupying a corner. The group workshop had come to represent a cherished ideal for Bryant. He recognised that good work was inseparable from the life that he had created with Kate. Whilst Bryant's work can be found in collections such as the V&A and UCLA, California, and in cathedrals, it came out of the natural, village and domestic, familial environment in which he located his practice. Those who worked in the workshops talk about its connection to an intimate, domestic cycle of work and shared meals with lots of discussion, to the adjacent house and garden, often overrun with children and grandchildren.

Bryant is survived by his wife Kate and their children Tamsin, Matthew and Tabitha.

Paul Harper

Bryant Fedden, born 17 July 1930, died 19 March 2004

Jean-Claude Lamborot



Lamborot
Photo: Kristoffel Boudens

Lamborot's father and grandfather were stonemasons. He himself showed a talent for drawing at an early age and was sent over a thirteen year period to a local painter for guidance, in exchange for vegetables from the garden. Later, when he worked for his father, he went to evening classes in Mâcon. After the war – five years of forced labour which didn't seem to have traumatised him – he worked for restoration firms in Lyon and Paris. In 1953 he got a big lettering job: 12,000 letters for the war memorial in Oradour-sur-Glâne. It took him three years to complete, and induced him to become a professional lettercarver.

Lamborot thought of himself as a rather lazy character, but that didn't seem to prevent him searching for and finding his own unique voice as a lettercarver in a



Part of inscription including Lamborot's mark made of his initials

country where contemporary fine lettering in stone was non-existent. That was not the only reason why he was never financially successful: he was also very much a reserved man, gentle and not extravert.

He loved the magnificent collection of mainly Imperial lettering at the Gallo-Roman Museum in Lyon, but did not imitate that style. He had received no calligraphic training and neither did he render type in stone. 'Absolutely legible-to-the-last-degree letters' were not his point. His lettering was always true to the material, stone. He leaves behind a widow, two daughters, five sons and some new lettering enthusiasts. Just before his death a little book was published: a condensation of many interviews with Lamborot. [See *Book reviews*, p13 – Ed.]

Kristoffel Boudens

Jean-Claude Lamborot, Beaujolais, France, 1921-2004

The Malleable Lettershape

Thoughts from the practice of a text designer for stone

When Kristoffel Boudens came over from Belgium to talk to Letter Exchange in June, he decided to focus on his selection of slides rather than overburden the audience with more theoretical matters, asking that those thoughts be made available through Forum. Here they are.

Bad typography is older than typography

In which I explain that good letter shapes need good spacing

As we compare inscriptions across all ages we see differences in quality. Most obvious is the quality of letter shapes, but 'good' letterforms don't always make good inscriptions. A beautiful 'ideal' letter like the Imperial Roman capital is not foolproof. One can find inscriptions where the letterforms in themselves have a most beautiful, rational balance, but where letter, word and line spacing are badly conceived, or where the placing of the text block doesn't show the sense of balance we find in both their architecture and their individual letter shapes. Also the hierarchy in sizes and weights can be poor, so what is left? Good letterforms badly spaced! That's a waste.

Everyone who designs letters by hand learns to give special attention to the shapes of the counters. In many Roman inscriptions the inter-letter spaces and the room around the text look accidental, haphazard, not 'designed', as if the makers were not conscious of them in the same way as they were of the counter spaces. Less successful inscriptions, even those made long before the invention of movable type, are like badly laid out printing: they consist of maybe beautiful but inflexible lettershapes badly placed in relation to one another and to the whole composition. Throughout the ages it seems to have been common for inscription makers to regard text design as merely linking letters to make words and then lines, and to put these lines one under the other. This way of working suggests that model alphabets must have been around much earlier than the renaissance. To start from a set of 'ideal' and thus inflexible lettershapes is a notion that belongs (belonged?) to typography. Typography is – mostly and among other things – about fixed letterforms versus varying inter-letter spaces. And yet everyone who designs text by hand has the opportunity of doing more than lining up the beautiful letters of an 'ideal' alphabet.

The malleable lettershape

In which the uselessness of inflexible letter shapes for certain designs is explained

Many formal inscriptions have been made in which the craftsman didn't have the idea of 'malleable lettershape' in mind. For me, designing text is about weighing space within the letters against space between them. I try to create rhythm by tuning these different kinds of negative shapes to one another. I regard letter proportions as a result rather than as a starting point. Letters are malleable units: taking advantage of this can improve

the composition as a whole.

Designing names on naturally shaped stones has played an important role in my breaking free of thinking in terms of typographic letterforms. When you put a typeset word within the irregular contour of a pebble, you almost always end up with letters which are too small, and the space around them is excessive and undesigned. Moreover, that space feels wasted. The text block will be



Carved pebble by Kristoffel Boudens

unable to compete with the explicitly physical presence of the stone. In most cases it is therefore advisable to use a combination of letters of different sizes, ligatures, and enclosed letters. This way the irregular contours of word and pebble can be adjusted to one another, and the undesigned space can be turned to full value negative space. Legibility may become less, but a name-pebble is not so much a legible inscription as an aesthetic and emotionally charged object.

Types of stone letters

In which I recognize two kinds: GRAPHIC skeleton letters and THREE DIMENSIONAL ones, and an in-between form

The scratched graffiti that we sometimes find on old church walls are a good example of 'graphic' letterforms. They were made with a pointed object in a homecoming movement, and without preliminary drawing. They are therefore related to writing. Early Christian and Republican Roman inscriptions fall between 'skeleton' and 'three-dimensional' lettering. I gather that early Christian inscriptions too were made without preliminary drawing, but chased or pushed with dummy and chisel. Republican Roman inscriptions were probably written on the stone with a pointed piece of charcoal or chalk, and then carved in V-section with a flat chisel, which begins to relate them more to drawing than writing. The result was a clean V-cut, wider than the line made by the pointed chisel and more three dimensional – sometimes so explicitly three dimensional that we can clearly perceive the play of light

and shadow. Imperial inscriptions take this tendency further into clearly three-dimensional forms. If there is no play of light and shadow because the letters are painted black, one is back with the 'graphic' form.

Properties of ideal stone letters

- Not too thin
- Little thick/thin-contrast
- No long fine serifs

First, unless we wish to work in the early Christian, graphic, skeleton style, we mustn't design stone letters too thin. Carving a long, narrow line is more difficult and demands more concentration than a wider one. With a wider line, the V-incision is deeper and the sides of the V-cut broader. This gives more support to the chisel and makes it easier to make those little surfaces clean and crisp (if desired). Apart from this technical reason, there are visual ones as well. The V-incision divides the stroke into a dark and a light side. This makes the carved letter look lighter than its outlined design. Besides that, we mostly read stone inscriptions from a certain distance, and moreover the stone background or the architecture on which the text must function can sometimes be very robust and have an explicit surface texture. In all these cases, the lettering will be better made bolder.

A second feature of stone letters is that I wouldn't give them a strong thick/thin contrast, if we're dealing with the average size of about 5 cm. When a letter is big enough, a strong contrast can be achieved without losing the necessary carvable weight in the thin parts. In the Trajan inscription, for example, the smallest letters are about 9.5 cm high, their thin parts about 0.5 cm thick and the serifs about 1 mm at their thinnest – after some nineteen centuries of weathering. The carving of 'shaded' Roman brush lettering is not a problem for bigger sizes in finely grained stone, but the 'Trajan' contrast is less advisable for small letters.

The elegant Imperial inscriptions, with their strong contrast and fine serifs, were carved in fine marble which would have presented no technical problems. Republican Roman inscriptions, on the other hand, are usually carved in coarse (probably local) kinds of stone such as Travertine marble and *Peperino* (see the epigraphic collection of the Museo Nazionale in Rome). It's impossible to carve fine details in these kinds of stone, so an obvious thick/thin contrast and fine serifs were out of question. The making of thick/thin weighted lettering on stone evolved from the flat brush (see Catich').

A third characteristic feature is: no long fine serifs. On many kinds of stone you have to fiddle a bit to carve long, fine serifs. That gives them a sense of mannerism, unlike in calligraphy, where a hairline can emerge naturally from the pen. Long serifs belong to paper rather than to stone (other, perhaps, than slate). Again, big lettering is an exception where the serifs are heavy enough to be easily carvable.



Kristoffel Boudens: *Hic Hora* (detail) Letters approx 3 in high, carved into a French limestone floor tile

Calligraphic mannerism

What else makes a letter on stone a real stone letter?

When I read Catich's *Origin of the Serif*, I had much sympathy with it. He questioned apparently unassailable scientific predecessors and tripped up their established theories through his practical knowledge as a brush-letterer. I saw him as a kind of Robin Hood. He was a brush-letterer through and through and proud of it, and rightly assessed that the lettering on numerous Roman inscriptions was written with the flat brush before being carved. As a result, his own stone lettering and figurative work are a pure emulation of his brush designs. He thought his designs through the brush, not through stone.

Carved brush-writing can be seen as calligraphic mannerism. Letters for stone should not look like brush-writing, just as a beautiful woman's coat should not look like a tiger. A typical calligraphic morphology emerged from the interaction between pen, paper and ink, and type looks different from the calligraphic forms from which it emerged because it is produced in a different way. Stone letters should be reconsidered through their specific material and should be developed in the act of carving, taking into account the specificity of the stone, the carving implement and the size of the letters. Aspiring lettercarvers should, as it were, learn to design their letters straight into the stone.

A fine-grained stone which has an even hardness and texture may persuade the skilled lettercarver to imitate the kind of beauty seen in calligraphy or typography. Calligraphically schooled lettercarvers usually find it difficult to set their pen/brush skills aside, while typographically schooled carvers tend to produce typography on stone. That's the reason why lettering on stone is so often no more than a pale shadow of shapes that have been developed in another medium.

A missed chance

Outline-drawn stone lettering did already exist during the Imperial era. The letter shapes carved to take bronze infilling were designed that way. And their weight was very well suited to the imposing architecture they were combined with. However, the change historically has been from brush lettering on stone to outline drawing, as exemplified by the kind of fifteenth-century lettering in which a typical capital 'N' has a narrow diagonal and stems of the same width as those in the other letters of the alphabet. In Italy we see not only the example alphabets of Pacioli and others with their (nowadays not so highly regarded) constructed letters, there is also the emergence of the freehand outline-drawn stone letters mentioned above. Lettercarvers opted deliberately for outline drawing. This was a potentially beneficial change for stone lettering, because building up letters is closer to the technique of carving than writing is. After a certain time, though, this retreat from calligraphy deteriorated into thoughtless imitation of type. Stone lettering gradually changed from being the little brother of calligraphy into being the little brother of typography.

After I gave my lecture in London I bought Nicolette Gray's *Lettering on Buildings* (1960) and found that several of her conclusions, though arrived at by a different route, were the same as mine. There is nothing new under the sun.

Notes

- 1 Edward Catich *The Origin of the Serif*, Catich Gallery, St Ambrose University, Iowa, 2nd ed, 1991, chapter 22.

Kristoffel Boudens' lettercarving practice is in Bruges. His siblings Liesbet and Pieter have lettering work in an exhibition at the Manna Art Gallery, Bruges, until 13 November: mannakunsthuis@skynet.be

Event reviews

Tom Kemp: The Wet and the Dry

Rivington Gallery, London
5-30 May 2004

In this one-man show of twenty-seven works on paper and canvas, Tom Kemp takes his exploration of the disciplines of writing one step further from the formal letter itself. Although he is a master in the use of the brush to create formal Roman letters, it is the subject of *writing* itself that fascinates Kemp. As he states in the exhibition blurb: 'I paint as though I were writing ... How close can you get to writing without writing?' The pieces in this exhibition have their genesis in the fine motor skills that Kemp has developed through his understanding of the brush, but nowhere result in anything that remotely resembles a letter.

The show includes two types of work. The dry works of the title were created with a stick of 9B graphite, and result in carefully controlled patterns of varying intensities of grey on large sheets of paper (see photo). The wet works were made with enamel on canvas, and involve various techniques of dribbling, pushing or scraping the fluid across the stretched surface, the



Tom Kemp: *Drawing 4*. Graphite stick on paper, 49 × 33 in, 2003

liquid drying in globular masses or attenuated strings as the paint runs dry.

All the pieces demonstrate a strong sense of pattern-making that reflects Kemp's calligraphic background. This prompts him to state: 'I always smirk when I hear about the abstract expressionists being influenced by calligraphy. That's like being influenced by mountaineering without climbing a hill.'

But it is the gestural qualities employed in the act of making that Kemp is at pains to capture.

The body in motion is allowed to take over so that the marks become 'a surprisingly subtle form of recording human movement'. Thus Kemp describes the graphite tool in sensual terms: 'It shines, it's warm, it understands paper very well. Just put it on the surface, move it in a straight line and take it off the surface.'

This preoccupation with movement, with fluidity and with gesture can be seen behind Kemp's earlier zeal for the brush in opposition to the pen – 'the pen is a rather limited cousin to the brush', as he states in the introduction to his book, *Formal Brush Writing*. There is a welcome liberation and originality in Kemp's work that contrasts with the narrow concern with the shape and form of letters as ends in themselves.

Edward Wates

Speaking Stones

Exhibition of lettering at Mill Dene, Blockley, Gloucestershire
July–August 2004

It's difficult to decide whether this really means to be an exhibition or not. It is the fourth year of lettering at Mill Dene, the garden of a Cotswold guest house. There are about thirty pieces of work, mostly new, perhaps fewer than in previous years and less cluttered. On the day that I went there were no catalogues and only some of the work was labelled.

Speaking Stones is a curious concept. Here, it seems to mean stones with texts carved on them, but what can we engrave on stone that will invite and repay re-reading? It's a serious question with so much time, effort and thought needed to move, shape and carve stone.

There is a bench with a humorous quotation, a series of what might be workshop experiments or samples: twelve-inch slates cut with various alphabets, cool and formal. There is a slate wind chime with tiny mysterious marks, like proto-letters. There are at least six standing stones of green and black slate; one functions as a sun marker, another inexplicably lists the five senses, or perhaps they're commands. Others have lines of poetry. All these pieces are skilfully made. At least one has carving as interesting and vigorous as its text. But in

relying on text, are we hoping to guarantee significance and interest in our work? The drawback is the necessary brevity stone calls for. Often we haven't the time or stone for complex and developed messages: we are left with inscrutable conciseness. More to the point, as letterers we aren't necessarily thinkers or poets or commentators. Nor would we expect to be. We are carvers and sculptors. Interest and passion lie in the visual, spatial and tactile qualities of our work. Here at Mill Dene the most striking piece is a bright red alphabet, two feet by eighteen inches, fret-cut from acrylic, invisibly suspended and powerful against the bright green backdrop of foliage. It doesn't say anything, and in fact it's definitely not a speaking stone: it's an experiment with shapes and space – attractive, uplifting and interesting.

Giles Macdonald

Lecture: Phil Surey on his work

The St Bride Foundation,
London
11 May 2004

Phil Surey, 2004 Winston Churchill Fellowship recipient and Letter Exchange committee member, began his lettering career as a trainee at a sign company in Surrey, eventually turning freelance as a signwriter. In the mid-1990s he went on to study at City & Guilds of London Art School where he particularly liked working in wood and stone. I remember his talent and inventiveness, bringing, for instance, much creative exploration to a block of stone and the three-dimensional letter that emerged from it. Phil spoke of the inspired teaching there of Tom Perkins, Tom Kemp and Martin Wenham.

Since emerging himself (from C&G) he has deservedly had a variety of commissions – painted lettering on walls for the Kindersley Centre at Lambourn (Berks), gravestones, sundials, sculpted plaques and pillars, painted inscriptions in universities, hospitals and churches. The most moving of these (to me) was the painted memorial in St Bride's Church, London ('the journalists' church'), to the media people who died in the Iraq war in 2003 – half by

'friendly fire'.

There is no doubt that Phil will eventually be joining the Pantheon of Fine Letterers. I'm not sure how many the Pantheon can contain, but one or two will have to shove over a bit!

Phil's lecture was sponsored by the South London Lettering Association. Thank you, SLLA!

Jerry Cinamon

See Clippings for news of Phil's coming Churchill Scholarship trip to India

The Fourth Edward Johnston Foundation Seminar

Ditchling, Sussex
June 2004

Delegates from as far afield as America, Norway, Ireland and Belgium converged on this historic village in the Sussex Downs. An informal talk on Friday evening by local author and illustrator John Vernon Lord provided a lighthearted start, followed by a fish and chip supper at The Bull Inn, giving us all a chance to renew friendships and welcome new faces.



Ieuan Rees with Ewan Clayton at the EJF seminar.

Photo: Bill Kocher

Over the next two days a series of lectures took place in the comfortable village hall, with an opportunity in the breaks to have a go at letter carving under the watchful eye of John Neilson. Lectures ranged from Brian Keeble's philosophical look back to Gill and Johnston's mentor W R Lethaby to Matthew Carter's cutting-edge work for Microsoft and the problems peculiar to screen fonts. A pivotal balance was struck by the all-embracing practice and character of Ieuan Rees, whose large-scale blackboard calligraphy recalled Johnston's famous demonstrations at Lethaby's Central School. From Germany, letter carver Wolfgang Jakob's slides revealed a passion

for stone, and a way of working in stark contrast to the linear draughtsmanship of many British lettercutters or the more directly pen-informed letters cut by Rees. Instead of imposing an incised letter onto a honed surface, Jakob uses all the stone surfaces to emphasise the qualities of the material (interestingly close in thinking to Gill's direct carving message, yet how different the outcome). Jakob's work highlighted how, in our British lettercutting tradition, the focus on detail too often blinds us to the whole stone in its surroundings. John Miles talked modestly about his work with Colin Banks for the Royal Mail over thirty years ago. Seeing slides of Miles's early drawings for the Post Office's distinctive corporate image, I realised that Gill's and Johnston's sans faces would have been conceived in the same way: all three alphabets were initially used for signs. All three are still in use in some form today. Enduring typefaces undergo subtle alteration as print technologies change. Philip Moore, a printer for forty years, gave us a humorous overview of the printing trade, with a glimpse at the fully automated, de-skilled printing works of the future.

A visit to the late John Skelton's workshop under the guidance of his daughter Helen Mary provided an interlude, as did the buffet supper at the Old Meeting House, with a wonderful and relaxing guitar recital by Rebecca Baulch. By Sunday afternoon typographers, calligraphers, printers and lettercutters were freely exchanging views, techniques and experiences. This fruitful seminar was a credit to Gerald Fleuss, Patricia Gidney and the other organisers and helpers.

The historical context of the EJF and its seminars is important. Brian Keeble's talk reminded me of the spiritual vision in Gill and Johnston's Ditchling. What is our vision now? Looking at Johnston's headstone in Ditchling churchyard before leaving, I was reminded that he died in the same year as the D-Day landings, which were being commemorated the same weekend. So much has changed in the past sixty years. Will the world and the lettering arts see such rapid change again?

Chris Elsey

Next year's International Seminar will be on 13-15 May 2005. See Forthcoming Events overleaf.

Book reviews

Typographically Speaking: The Art of Matthew Carter

Essays by Margaret Re, Johanna Drucker and James Mosley
Princeton Architectural Press

ISBN 1-56898-427-8
Paperback 104 pp 13 × 9 in \$35

Published to accompany an exhibition which toured the eastern USA from 2002 until earlier this year, this book has four essays on Carter's work, colour plates of some of the exhibition panels, and a list of all of Carter's typefaces compiled by himself, with specimens of most of them. The essays range from detailed consideration of the making of Galliard, Bell Centennial and Walker (an experimental face designed for the Walker Art Gallery, Minneapolis) to Carter's historical revivals and the span of his experience of type-making from punch-cutting to digitising. When the writers wax theoretical, they tend to float into muddy, jargon-infested waters:

'Typography is the environment in which meaning resides as we visually communicate with each other through time and space'... Our own James Mosley's feet, however, remain on solid ground in his lucid and revealing article on Carter's interpretation of historical models. I suspect some of the book would make more sense in conjunction with the exhibition: the colour plates of the exhibition panels are rather too small to see some of the detail, but overall this is a nicely produced publication and a useful reference for the work of one of the world's most skilled type designers. You can't fail to be impressed by the range of Carter's work and the knowledge, sensitivity and intelligence that lie behind it.

Obtainable from Amazon, or see www.papress.com

Crafts Study Centre: Essays for the Opening

Ed. Simon Olding and Pat Carter
Canterton Books

ISBN 0-9541627-4-9
Paperback 108 pp 8 1/4 × 8 1/4 in

A collection of six essays marking this year's move to new purpose-built accommodation in Farnham. Chapters on the collection's four main areas (*Textiles* by Leslie Millar, *Ceramics* by Edmund de Waal, *Lettering* by Ewan Clayton and *Furniture* by Matthew Burt) constitute something of a potted

history of postwar British crafts. Clayton's useful survey includes an account of his own background (brought up in Ditchling in Johnston's wake and inspired to embark on a calligraphic career by Irene Wellington: the work of these two constitutes the bulk of the Centre's lettering archive), and presents a view of the progress of calligraphy and lettering since Johnston and Gill, with some interesting speculation on what might have happened if, rather than vanishing in the 1960s, lettering had continued to be available within mainstream art education. Identifying a new-found confidence emerging in the 1990s with the growth of Letter Exchange, CLAS and Memorials by Artists, Clayton also describes developments in the work itself: the influence of David Jones in the work of Ann Hechle, the emergence of individual voices like that of Tom Perkins and major works such as Donald Jackson's massive Bible project. He points to the German influence, especially that of Burgert, but suggests that 'lack of commitment to content or text is still the Achilles' heel of western lettering in all areas'. Chapter headings use a prototype of the font being developed by FineFonts from Tom Perkins's capitals.

Lettres de Pierre: Jean-Claude Lamborot, Graveur Lapidaire

Laure Bernard
Éditions Alain Paccoud

ISBN 2-9521661-0-2
Paperback 192pp 8 × 6 in
15 euros

Obtainable from publisher at 25 rue Montesquieu, 01000 Bourg-en-Bresse, France or via Amazon.fr

This book, in French, is distilled from a series of interviews between the author, who is in her twenties, and the lettercarver Jean-Claude Lamborot, who was near the end of his life. My first impressions were not favourable: the dreaded 'perfect' binding (now falling apart), the small and poorly reproduced photographs. The entire text – 'for some strange reason' as the author says – is centred, thus encouraging us to read it as a poem, and in places the language is decidedly impressionistic. Bernard in full flight embodies the kind of typically French,

abstract, romantic theorising that we plodding Anglo-Saxons find so hard to take seriously: 'In a slightly magical way, [stone carving] reveals to the eyes of the initiated its own laws and, in so doing, knocks a little against our certainties, lets us glimpse other ways of seeing, of feeling, of thinking or of believing.' Well maybe. And yet... in amongst the dense language and sometimes extravagant claims for Lamborot's work there are some very perceptive and interesting points made and truths hinted at, and what emerges in the end is an engaging story of the author's gradual understanding of what made Lamborot tick. A picture forms of a man who was full of contradictions: a stonemason who wanted to be buried under a tree, an artist who hated the art world, an artisan who criticised craftsmanship without art. And a lettercarver with a passion for language, lettering and stone grateful for contact with those few others who shared it and frustrated that so few lived in France. Bernard describes Lamborot's association with the *École de Lure*, the Boudens and Jan de Broes in Belgium, his reading of *Schrift und Symbol* and Gill. Here are my translations of a few of Lamborot's words quoted by Bernard: 'I like stone to be like the bark of a tree. Rough. If you carve away too much at it, if you rub it down, you reduce it to nothing.' 'Stone is alive: not dead matter as most people imagine.' 'Certain groups of letters ring like a musical chord.' 'Art is movement towards perfection, never perfection itself.' Notwithstanding its flights of fancy, this unusual book is a significant addition to the tiny body of literature about lettercarving. Lamborot saw a pre-publication copy of the book just before he died, and was apparently pleased.

Footnote

No. 1 in a series of edifying observations on the lettering arts

'... I found myself in Lettering. I didn't turn up for something, so they just put me in that. They were all neat f***ers in Lettering. They might as well have put me in for sky-diving for all the use I was at lettering. I failed all the exams. I stayed on because it was better than working.'

John Lennon on classes at Liverpool College of Art

Forthcoming events

Alphabets at work: handwritten and small press books
WOA Gallery, Market Square, Bampton, Oxfordshire, 1-19 December 2004, 10.30-12.30 and 2-4 pm (Tuesday-Saturday), 2-4 pm (Sunday), admission free. Exhibition of manuscript books by Irene Wellington, Dorothy Mahoney, Heather Child, Joan Pilsbury, Ann Hechle, Sue Hufton, Margaret Daubney, Hans-Joachim Burgert, Susan Leiper, Juliet Bankes, Ewan Clayton, Edward Wates and others, together with small press printed books by Vivian Ridler and Oxford Guild of Printers.

Further details from Edward Wates, 12 Summerhill Road, Oxford OX2 7JY t: 01865 558837

An exhibition by Phil Baines and Catherine Dixon, **Lisbon: reading the city**, is planned for Lisbon's Museu da Cidade in September and November. This is the result of discovering that many locations photographed by Nicolette Gray in the 1960s were still extant. Funding from both Central Saint Martins and the British Council enabled two study trips during which 1,600 photos were taken. A publication will also be available.

Writing 2005 Symposium 15-22 July 2005

The tutors for the next conference at the University of Sunderland will be Thomas Ingmire, Gottfried Pott, Susan Skarsgard and Georgia Deaver. Georgia and Gottfried are making their first visits to teach in the UK. If you are interested in reserving a place for next year please contact the conference organiser Robert Cooper at robert@cooperphoto.co.uk.

Gary Breeze's exhibition *Musæum* opens on 20 November 2004 for twelve weeks at Roche Court, Wiltshire. See article on p8 for contact details. We are told: '*Musæum* will be a collection of recent pieces by Gary Breeze which bring together the ideas which have pervaded his work over the past decade or more. The show is presented as an 'imaginary collection' of artefacts. A fully illustrated book will contain the 'catalogue', a list of objects far longer than the fifteen or so pieces on display. Most of the entries don't exist, as if we are seeing just a part of a larger collection. This idea (based on the concept of the museum) allows the gaps between the various kinds of inscriptions Gary makes to be partially filled in. "It is in these



Gary Breeze: *Norfolk Birds* (detail). One of the pieces in Gary's forthcoming *Musæum* exhibition

spaces that our minds are free to wander when we visit a museum; like studying our own synapses". And so we find words here which try to jog our memory, sometimes describing the world around, but also simple lyrics from popular music which express our internal view of reality; that of love, hope and mood. Our symbiotic relationship with Nature runs through everything we feel: although "Ev'ry April, May and June, you lose your reason underneath a yellow moon", it is just as likely that "the moon'll hide its light when you get the blues in the night."

The Friends of St Bride announce: 7 September-7 October:

Newspaper design - exhibition looking newspaper design over the past 250 years, curated by Simon Esterson.

14 September: **Simon Esterson** speaks about the exhibition and some of the issues and trends in contemporary newspaper design.

28 September: **John D Berry**, *Contemporary newspaper design: shaping the news in the digital age*.

Book launch 5.30pm, lecture 7pm
12-22 October: *SLLA Autumn exhibition*

18-20 October: *Friends of St Bride Conference, Bad Type*; see website for more information and registration details.

29 October-26 November: *Gig Art* - exhibition of design related to popular music culture

16 November: *Mistral and the 'shopping list' types*; **James Clough** shares his enthusiasm for one of the all time great script types, which celebrated its fiftieth anniversary last year.

All events at St Bride Printing Library: St Bride Institute, Bride Lane, off Fleet Street, London EC4Y 8EE
t: 020 7353 4660
www.stbride.org

The **Memorial Arts Charity** plans to continue its successful letter carving courses next year, probably adding Dorset and Yorkshire to the list of locations. Contact 01728 688934 or e-mail clare@memorialartscharity.org.uk

Introduction to lettercarving in stone, Llansilin, Powys.

7-9 December 2004 and
29-31 March 2005
Tutor: John Neilson
Information on 01691 791345 or
enq@createdays.co.uk

The dates of the next **Edward Johnston Foundation International Lettering Seminar** at Ditchling, Sussex, are 13-15 May 2005.

Speakers include Gerard Unger, Gerald Fleuss, Richard Kindersley, Ken Garland and Jerry Cinamon, plus spot featuring three calligraphers.

Student bursaries available. Fuller details on the EJF's new website: www.ejf.org.uk, or from Gerald Fleuss, The Old School House, Church Lane, Ditchling, Sussex BN6 8TB
t: 01273 844505
See p12 for review of this year's event.

Small Publishers Fair 2004, 22-23 October 2004, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1. For further information contact RGAP on 01335 370127 or email: info@rgap.co.uk

London Artists Book Fair 2004, 25-27 November 2004, The Institute of Contemporary Arts, The Mall, London SW1Y 5AH, t: 0207 930 3647. Information from Marcus Campbell: campbell@marcuscampbell.demon.co.uk

Outwords! Outdoor lettering exhibition at Hutton-in-the-Forest, Penrith, Cumbria, May to August 2005. For details contact Pip Hall at pip.hall@virgin.net

Clippings

After a year's suspense, **Incisive Letterwork** have won the contract to design and carve all the lettering required for the National Gallery Getty Wing and entrance refurbishment. This includes external carving above the new entrance, an opening stone, Portland stone panels carved with the names of all donors since 1826, and THE NATIONAL GALLERY on the freeze of the portico above the main entrance. They have asked some other Letter Exchange members to help with the panels. Congratulations to Brenda and Annet on this major commission. *Forum* will keep readers posted on progress!

Michael Harvey continues his tale of woe (*Clippings, Forum 7*): 'The Edinburgh commission has been extended to include two large Portland stone panels, each approximately 2.5 m square, with donors' names inscribed. As usual with this kind of job, the list of names is incomplete and the opening date too close. I designed layouts for both panels, and two letter carvers - one in Wiltshire the other in Perth - provided estimates, both eager to know when the stone would arrive so that whoever was chosen could plan their work schedule. Calls to the architect weren't helpful for they had no idea if the masonry firm in Scotland had ordered stone or even been in touch with the quarry on Portland. Requests for the final list of donors were met with silence. Next came a request for a stone for the opening ceremony in August to be unveiled by a royal person. A lengthy text arrived, but as there is little room for another stone it was proposed to incorporate this text in the first of the two donor panels. No decision had been made by the end of May, but a decision *had* been made to produce vinyl lettering facimiles of the stones in MDF and install the actual stones in 2005. 'You can't expect this eminent person to unveil a piece of MDF', I told the architect, 'he must have a proper tablet!' The latest news is that the firm who would supply the temporary MDF panels has a machine that will cut v-section letters in this material, so it's on the cards that these will be permanent and that I only need to supply digital artwork to suit their machine. I still await the final list of donors.' Michael gave a talk at **TypeCon04** in San Francisco in July, entitled

Goodbye Analogue, Hello Digital. TypeCon is a smaller, US-only version of the annual ATypI conference.

Catherine Dixon, who has been teaching as an 'Associate Lecturer' (ie on termly contracts) at the Central St Martins College of Art & Design, London, was confirmed as a Senior Lecturer in Typography at Easter this year. She will continue to work with **Phil Baines** to develop the teaching of typography on the BA(Hons) Graphic Design course as well as maintaining the Central Lettering Record.



Whodunnit? Alastair Johnston in the US would like to find out who carved this lettering in Pied Bull Yard, Bury Place, close to the British Museum in London. Does anyone know? Answers on a postcard...

Phil Surey embarks in November on a seven-week visit to India to study traditional signwriting methods, funded by the award of a Churchill Fellowship. He's spending two weeks in Delhi, then going to Madras to visit film-hoarding painters. He'll be giving us an account of his trip in a future *Forum*.

Stuart Buckle has now finished his two-year lettercarving apprenticeship with **Gary Breeze**, funded by the Jerwood Charitable Foundation through **The Memorial Arts Charity** (which is affiliated to Memorials by Artists). Stuart is now self-employed and will continue to be based at Gary's workshop for the time being. Gary says 'Stuart's skill with a chisel is excellent and he has a natural flair for relief carving, which in time could make him one of the best.' The Memorial Arts Charity have been awarded a further grant for two more apprenticeships. These will be with **Charlotte Howarth** in Norfolk and **Eric Marland** in Cambridge. The Memorial Arts Charity would like to know if anyone out there knows of potential apprentices who might be interested:
t: 01728 688934 or e-mail
Clare@memorialartscharity.org.uk

Chris Elsey's lettercutting workshop has moved to the yard of a landscape stone firm called

Stonescapes in Guildford Road, Cranleigh, Surrey where there are facilities for dealing with large stone. He can still be contacted at his home address, where he works on designs and smaller pieces.

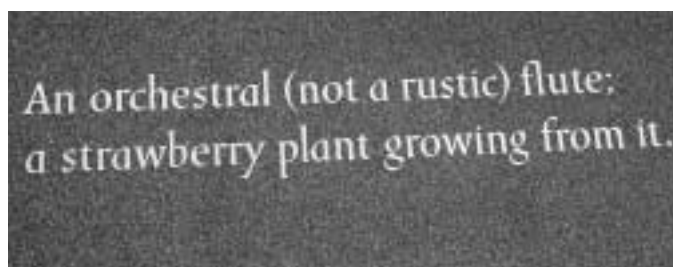
In spring this year there was an exhibition of alphabets by **Jean Larcher** at the Bartlhaus museum at Pettenbach in the northern foothills of the Austrian Alps. The museum is dedicated to lettering and *ex-libris* plates and is currently running an exhibition on Gothic script. See www.e-welt.net/bartlhaus
t: 00 43 (0)7586 7455

The **Bank of England** has been running an exhibition on the history of their staff from 1764, which has included demonstrations of a scribe using quills and dip pens. Mark L'argent and Cherrill Avery, the calligraphers involved, report lively interest, especially from school parties from London and abroad who have participated enthusiastically in workshops. Mark points out that this disproves a recent assertion in the *Daily Telegraph* that real calligraphy is all but dead and practised only by an order of nuns in Dorset.

On 11 May Joe Kerr's BBC Radio 4 *Routemasters* programme featured the story of the 1958-64 Kinneir & Calvert road signs. The programme included interviews with **Margaret Calvert** and **Phil Baines**. That same signing scheme (and cast) will also feature in an ITV series *Designed for the Masses* which is scheduled for transmission this autumn. On 19 June Phil and Nicholas Barker of the Type Museum spoke on Radio 4's *Today* programme about the US government's recent decision to change the font it uses for official records from Courier New 12 to Times New Roman 14.

Nick Sloane writes: 'Another large Finlay commission. The brief was to produce 22 medium-to-long inscriptions ('Images from an Arcadian Dream Garden') on horizontal granite benches

Part of Nick Sloane's Hamilton Finlay commission in the City of London



running along the east and west sides of the plaza from which the Gherkin springs in the City of London. It was specified that the inscriptions be flush-finished, so as not to trap water. How to achieve this technically was left to me, as were letterforms and layout. Since the letters would be filled, there seemed no particular merit in a v-cut, so sandblasting was indicated. This was complicated however by a later request that half of the slabs be worked on site. Since I could find no reliable way of sub-contracting this, I invested in a dustless sandblaster, did some intensive research and experiment with grit and tapes, cut the first half at home and then lugged the whole caboodle to London to finish the job in a mobile shanty-town on site. All in caps and lowercase, the aim was a relatively transparent letter, adapted to the characteristics of the medium, with just enough of an irregular kick to stand out from the surrounding Foster aesthetic. A terracotta-coloured fill was chosen for the same reason. The filling of the letters proved trickier than anticipated: I was reluctant to use resin, but a succession of cement-based mixes proved unsatisfactory. Finally I found a specialist white cement which, when mixed with a blend of pigments, seemed to work well. This job has followed the classic course: initial excitement, delight when a huge price is approved, lots of work, apparently insoluble problems, eventual solutions, more problems leading to a slow finish, and the realization that the huge price was in retrospect rather reasonable. By the time you read this, the results should be visible at 30 St Mary Axe, EC3. Remember that it was not as simple as I hope it will look.'

The 'Gallery' section of the latest **Letter Arts Review** (Vol.18 no.4) includes seven pieces from last year's Letter Exchange exhibition, and also features shows in Bruges and Italy. There

is an article on the Edward Johnston Foundation by Gareth Colgan. Contact: PO Box 9986, Greensboro NC 27429
t: 336 272 6139

Letter Exchange still has catalogues for sale:

10th Anniversary Exhibition 1998
56pp, colour and b/w, £7 incl p&p
15th Anniversary Exhibition 2003
64pp, full colour, £12 incl p&p
Available from: Ros Pritchard,
5 Upper Camden Place, Camden Rd,
Bath BA1 5HX, t/fx 01225 338730;
cheques to 'Letter Exchange'.

Paul Shaw has received two small grants to continue his work on a biography of W A Duggins (book designer, type designer, calligrapher, letterer, illustrator et al), one from the Book Club of California and the other from The Harry Ransom Center for the Humanities at the University of Texas in Austin. The latter will involve a month-long stay at the HRCH examining the archives of The Limited Editions Club and Alfred A Knopf. Paul also co-curated with Abby Goldstein an exhibition in New York City, which ran until August, entitled *Against the Grain: Book Covers and Jackets of Alvin Lustig, Elaine Lustig-Cohen, Chip Kidd and Barbara de Wilde*. He says: 'Not much in the way of lettering or calligraphy in the designs but they are still fabulous.'

Teucer Wilson is working on a large public art lettering project in Bristol, commissioned by Sustrans. The project is tied in with the redevelopment of an area called The Dings, near Temple Meads station. The aim is to create a 'home zone' where pedestrians and cyclists are given priority over cars, and the landscaping and layout will be all about slowing down traffic and deterring unwanted vehicles. Teucer is working with a historian and a poet to produce up to about twenty pieces of work, using a mixture of anecdote, historical fact and newly written pieces as text. He hopes to experiment with materials, and the project will probably involve a mixture of techniques: cast iron, cast resin, stainless steel, stonecarving and possibly sandblasting.

Terry McEvoy writes: 'Pure Blue Design is working on the development of a new business venture of our own. Called FitzGerald Arts, it will make public a wide collection of illustrative art garnered during

our years in design. To this core we have added original pictures from other sources and now intend to publish on the internet. We are offering prints of all the pieces (currently 160 different original paintings, drawings and pastels) on high-quality textured paper via the Giclée method, using light-fast stock and very fine seven-colour inkjet heads to produce one-off prints. We have installed a complete shopping cart operation allowing visitors to buy online. The catalogue is arranged into nine separate subjects (Landscape, Animals, Still Life, etc) and we intend adding other categories. We would be thrilled to be able to create a category for work by letterers! If anyone out there has any pieces for this category (we can sell both originals and prints) please call us on 01508 491109, or check out fitzgeraldarts.com. By the time *Forum* is on the streets we will be on the air!

Richard Grasby has again revised his manual *Lettercutting in Stone*. Its format makes it easy to update, and Richard has responded to comments and new information. Obtainable direct from Bedchester House, Bedchester, Shaftesbury, Dorset SP7 0JU or from Amazon. ISBN 0 951 3858 28

Nancy and David Howells have a new website for information and practical tips about Automatic Pens: www.automaticpens.co.uk

Mike Pratley's e-mail address has changed to studio@mikepratley.co.uk

Geoffrey Winston has designed the catalogue for the exhibition *Josef and Anni Albers: Designs for Living*, at the Cooper-Hewitt Museum in New York. He has also designed catalogues for *Rediscovering Wolmark: a pioneer of British modernism* at the Ben Uri Gallery, London and the Ferens, Hull, and for *William Turnbull: heads and figures* at James Hyman Fine Art. Geoffrey Winston's studio number has changed to 0208 348 2586.

Correction

On p11 of *Forum* 7, the name of the Rector of the RCA should, of course, have been Christopher Frayling, not Michael.

We need your news!
Please send it by post or e-mail to the editor
(see panel on right)

New members

Margaret Daubney

Margaret took a degree in English and trained as a teacher. It was the visual interpretation of the written word which first drew her to calligraphy, and she considers Ann Hechle her most important calligraphic influence. Margaret studied at Roehampton between 1984 and 1988 under Ann Camp, and returned to teach there in 1990. She has been course co-ordinator since 1997, but also teaches local groups and residential courses around the country and overseas. She is a tutor and co-ordinator for the SSI's Advanced Training Scheme, and a Fellow of both the SSI and CLAS. Her first book, *Experimenting with Calligraphy*, was published in 1995, and her second, *Calligraphy*, has just been re-issued as a paperback. She's also made a video, *Italic with a Flourish*. Throughout her career she has had a steady stream of commissioned work.



Charles Smith: *Letters are my Music*, slate 1994

Charles Smith

Charles lives near York and is a 'sculptor of letters, stonemason and designer'. He was apprenticed to a monumental sculptor from 1957 to 1962, then ten years later trained at Reigate School of Art & Design. His work has won two RIBA Craftsmanship Awards, and he is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts. Charles's commissioned work includes commemorative, architectural and civic pieces. He lists music, literature, poetry and various aspects of natural history as important factors in his work.

About Letter Exchange

Letter Exchange is a society for professionals involved in the lettering arts, from calligraphy and lettercutting, through design for print, type and book design, to architectural lettering and signage.

A forum for sharing common interests, it aims to promote fine lettering through the exchange of ideas, exhibitions, lectures, this journal, and an annual magazine with pages contributed by members.

Members' work is displayed on its website www.letterexchange.org.

Full membership is by election, and applications are always welcome.

Associate membership is open to all at £30 per year.

For more information please contact the Honorary Secretary (see right).

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