

DISPLAY TYPOGRAPHY

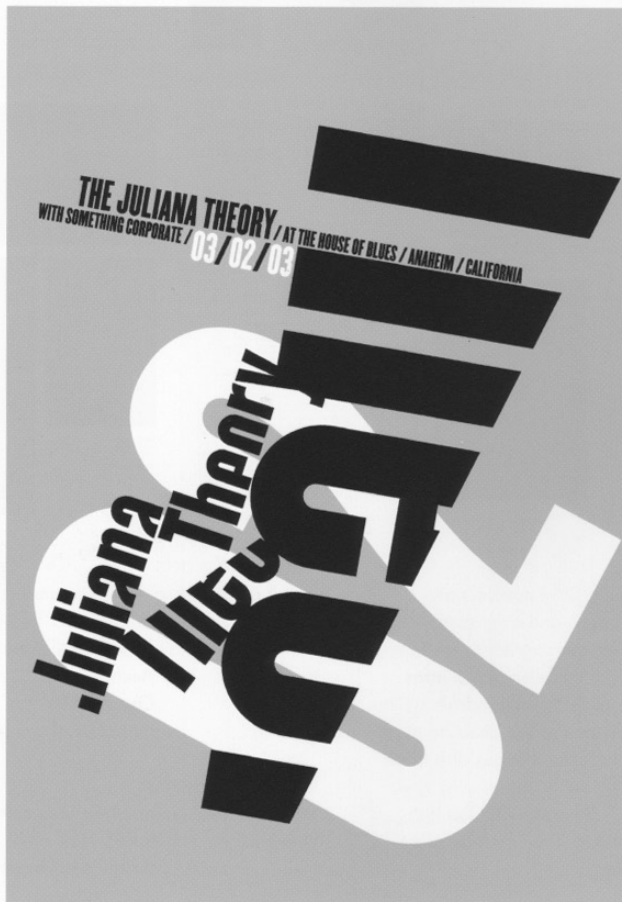
The term display typography is generally used to describe those forms of typographic work that involve the use of fewer words at larger scale, and to distinguish this work from editorial typography and the setting of continuous text. Examples include corporate identity, book jackets, packaging, fascias, and motion graphics. Display typography may involve the interpretive, decorative, or illustrative use of letterforms, providing opportunity for the associative values and the formal characteristics of letters to be explored and exploited to deliberate effect.

Display typefaces

Many typefaces are defined as display faces. This term denotes a face based around particular associative and decorative values, but also indicates that the face would be impractical for use at small scale or in the setting of continuous text. Display typefaces draw upon a wide and colorful range of sources and idioms, and are not constrained by the considerations of legibility and page economy that inform the design of text faces. They are frequently overt statements of creative intent, rather than neutral carriers of content.

The accessibility of digital type design media has led to a proliferation of idiosyncratic or eccentric letters, as well as the revival of many historic display faces. Display type reflects a wide range of vernacular sources, including signwriting, woodletter type, script and calligraphic traditions, and the many forms of the hand-rendered letter. A number of digital typefaces have been designed to replicate distorted or distressed finishes, creating type that appears chipped or blurred and evokes a sense of physical history. The patterns of low-resolution pixelation have been stylistically incorporated into the design of a number of explicitly digital fonts.

Right A robust sans serif type is set on a diagonal axis to create a dynamic composition of positive and negative forms in this poster by Sterotype Design. The cropped letters demonstrate the principle that lowercase letters are recognized primarily by their upper section.



USING TEXT FACES FOR DISPLAY

It should be noted that many text faces can be effectively used in display contexts, which can serve to draw attention to the intrinsic beauty of individual letterforms more commonly encountered within running text. Some faces based upon Venetian or Aldine models reveal particular elegance of form when viewed at large sizes. Their suitability for use at larger scale is determined to some extent by the quality of the digitization and, in particular, the optical mastering that has been applied in the design of the larger sizes.

Priorities of information

Variations of scale, tonal value, weight, color, and positioning may be necessary to establish the relationships between several different types of display information. Effective design prioritizes these elements visually within a single unified composition.

Within the design of a book jacket, for example, the elements would typically be: title, author, image, publisher (in the case of high-profile authors, the first two elements may be reversed).

Within the design of a poster or other event promotion, the elements would include: title/event, date, time, location, and booking information.

Tone

Digital media allow the designer to modify the tonal density of type or background. Used with sensitivity, tonal modulation can extend the depth and visual complexity of a monochrome design. The contrast and prominence of a large title may be moderated by printing in a percentage tint rather than a solid. Some care should be taken when applying this capability for type because it may affect the clarity of letterforms. Percentage screening lightens the tonal value of the type by introducing a fine pattern of white dots into the solid letterform. The effect upon the clarity and definition of the type may be imperceptible at larger sizes, but pale tints and coarse screening will reveal irregular edges to the letterforms that will be more intrusive at smaller sizes.

Radio Radio
Radio Radio

Above Type at four different tonal densities. Increased scale can offset the diminished legibility of pale or reversed type, increasing the dynamic palette available to the designer.

Right Vertical and diagonal elements and a complex use of negative space animate this subtle two-color poster by Stereotype Design.

The effectiveness of percentage screening is also affected by the quality of paper that is to be used. This determines the size of dot screen that it is feasible for the printer to use; a coarse or absorbent paper requires a coarser screen composed of larger, and therefore more visible, dots. If the budget allows, any moderation in the tonal density of text should be achieved by running a special color printing.

Reversed type

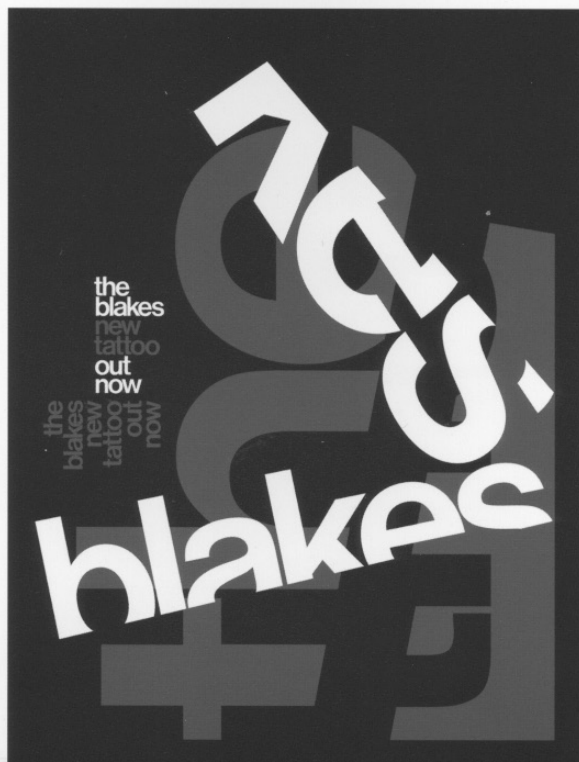
Type may be “reversed out” of a background color, resulting in letterforms composed of un-inked rather than inked space. While this may be extremely effective when using robust typefaces at

appropriate sizes, it will affect the legibility of letters, and may in some cases lead to problems in reproduction.

We are accustomed to viewing type as positive form upon a lighter background. While reversed type may create impact and visual variety upon the page, it is measurably less legible. High-contrast reversed lettering may be difficult or even painful to read. This need not be a consideration when setting titling or headlines of a few words, but is a strong argument against using reversed type for substantial amounts of continuous text. Typefaces are designed as positive inked forms, rather than negative forms to be surrounded by ink. Reversal can lead to loss of definition or detail in some typefaces; in particular, delicate hairlines and finely pointed serifs are prone to breaking or filling-in when reversed, fracturing or blunting the letterform. The quality of printing and the absorbency and roughness of the paper can also contribute to these problems.

Color

Color may be used to create emphasis, heighten contrast, evoke emotional responses, or provide informational color coding within a complex document. Some of the most effective display typography utilizes a limited range of specific colors rather than the full spectrum. A single additional printing may open up a range of possibilities, allowing the designer to use both positive and negative letterforms, duotone images, and a range of percentage tints in both of the two printed colors.



COLOR PRINTING

Four-color process printing uses the four process colors: cyan, magenta, yellow, and black. The initial letters of these colors form the color mode CMYK (the German word *kohl* is used for black), which should always be specified when producing digital artwork for print reproduction. A color image such as a photograph or illustration is reproduced through the successive overprinting of dot-screened images in each of these four colors. These are called color separations. Colored type printed by four-color process is therefore composed of very fine dots of the four process colors.

Although quality printing will render this almost imperceptible to the eye, the result does not compare with the evenness of surface and clarity of outline achieved when the type is printed as a special ink—an ink actually mixed to a specified color. Because this requires a separate printing from an additional plate, adding one or more specials to a four-color job has serious cost implications, but is justified where large areas of color or colored type are to be used. Special spot colors are specified using the Pantone system, a universal system of color specification.

Type and image

Digital media have given designers increased control over the introduction of type into an image space, to the extent that this has become an accepted norm within many design contexts. The ease with which type can be laid over or reversed out of a photographic image or illustration in turn raises a number of potential problems.

To place type upon any tonally varied background either impairs its legibility overall or creates variations of legibility and contrast, making some letters or words more prominent than others and, at worst, rendering some parts illegible. The widespread practice of attempting to correct this by the introduction of drop-shadow is at best a crude solution to problems that should have been avoided at their source. The loss of legibility associated with variations of background tone may in turn necessitate the use of larger or bolder type than would otherwise be necessary, sacrificing subtlety and flexibility in the design.

Some programs allow the designer to fill the type from an image source. Provided that the typeface is appropriately robust and has sufficient weight, this can be an extremely effective graphic device.



Right A range of basic digital effects applied to type. These digitally mimic the effects of different physical processes and phenomena.

Below Type is positioned at the center of the image, and composed of graduated tints from the same color range.

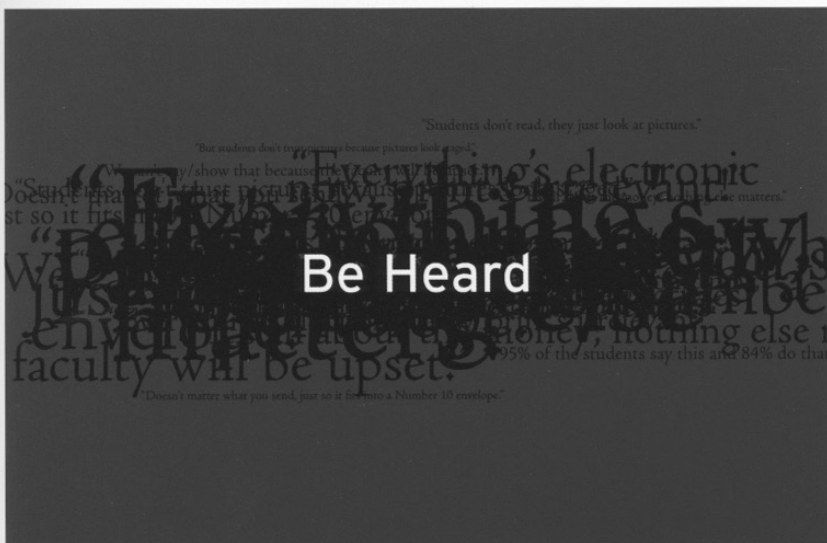
Bottom An image is used to fill the positive space of the type.

blur
shadow
spin
zoom
warp

Effects

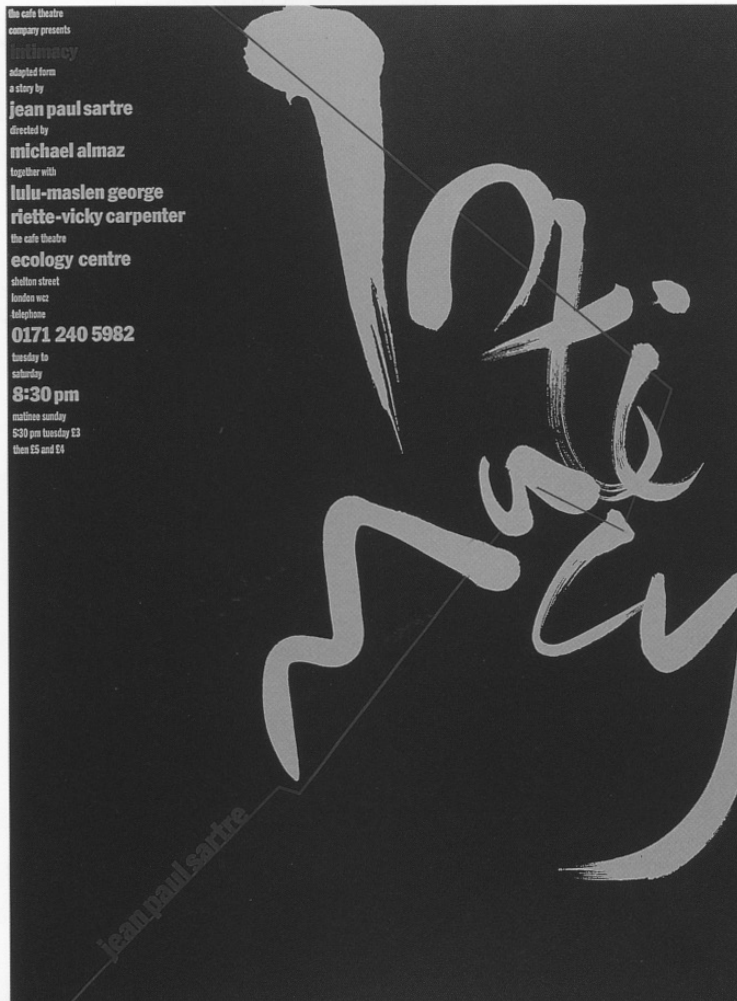
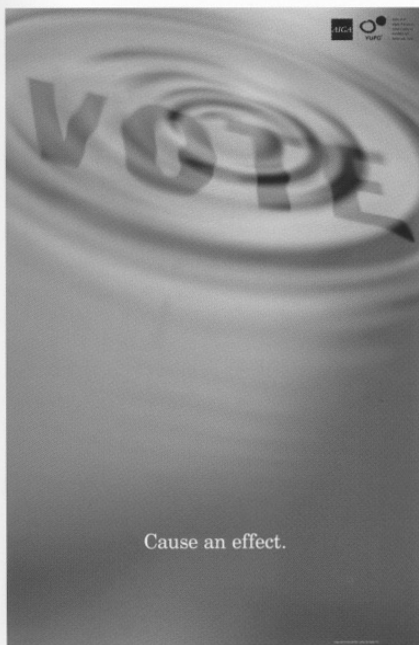
Digital programs offer a wide range of effects that can be applied to type. Many of these are essentially illusionistic, designed to replicate the effects of light. This may involve casting shadow as though the type were raised (drop-shadow), or creating the effect of three-dimensional embossed or recessed letterforms. Effects can replicate reflective surfaces such as chrome or glass, or luminous media, such as neon.

These effects are of varying use to the serious designer and should be used sparingly and with caution; a novelty effect may be as likely to distract the viewer from the message as it is to enhance it. Any effect should be integrated into the overall composition of the design. Illusions of three-dimensionality can be extremely effective in establishing a sense of depth, allowing the designer to organize multiple levels of information.



Left The clarity of reversed sans serif type is effectively juxtaposed with the "visual noise" of overlaid serif letters in this self-promotional booklet for design group Robert Rytter & Associates.

Below The strong diagonal emphasis of the abstract calligraphic forms is dramatically offset by the arrangement of information closely aligned to the top-left margin.



Above A simple phrase is given depth and resonance by its position within a large open space, echoing the visual metaphor of the ripple in this poster by Doyle Partners.

EVOKING RESPONSES THROUGH TYPE

Display setting frequently focuses upon the associative values of type, and the manner by which it evokes particular responses. At its simplest, the focus may be on subjective or abstract values: the response to the letterforms themselves (as curvaceous or angular, dominant or reticent, loud or soft, formal or informal, animated or static). More significant, however, is the range of associations type can evoke through reference to period, history, and tradition. Complex subtexts can be embedded in a design through the designer's awareness of cultural context and design history.

Titles themselves may provide starting points for their design, from within the specific shapes created by the words. Experimentation with different groupings and line-breaks will reveal patterns of ascenders and descenders, or other prominent graphic elements, that may be developed toward a setting of the title as a considered graphic unit.