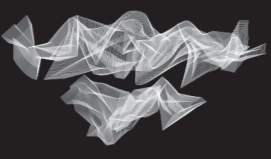
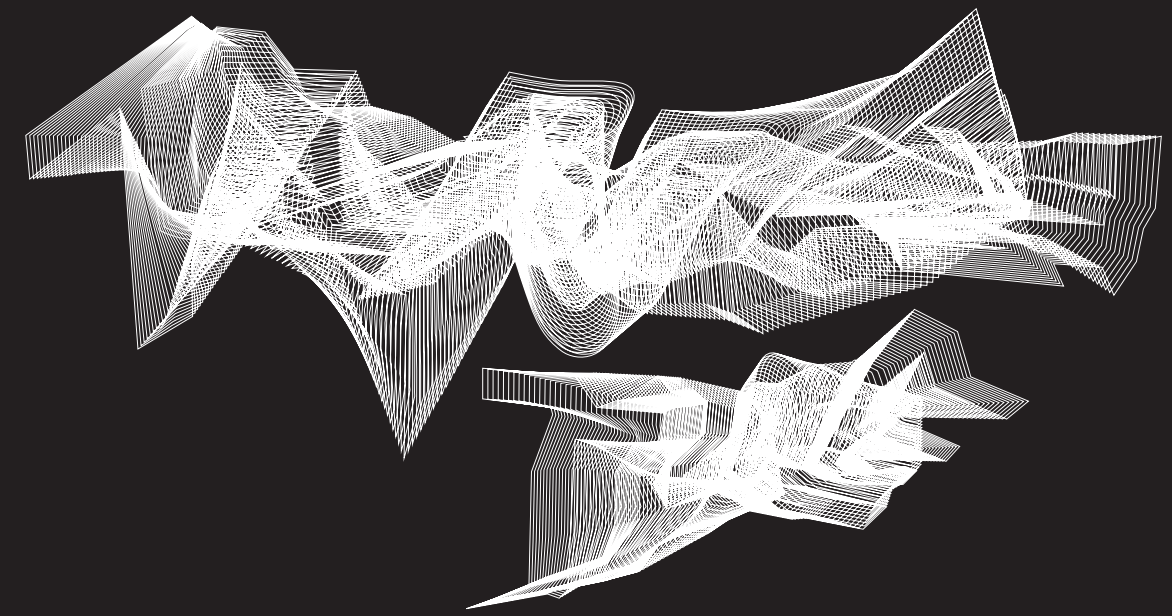


TEMPORAL TYPOGRAPHY | Brooke Francesi

MFA DESIGN 2015





TEMPORAL TYPOGRAPHY

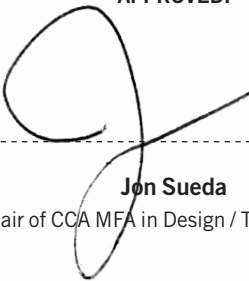
TEMPORAL TYPOGRAPHY

by Brooke Francesi

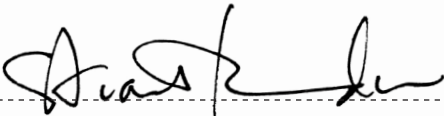
A project presented to the graduate faculty
CALIFORNIA COLLEGE OF THE ARTS

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Master of Fine Arts

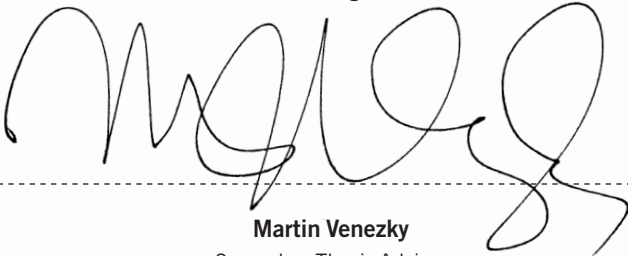
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ABSTRACT

Within the field of typography, letterforms typically embody either static or kinetic forms. However there is another category of typography that escapes the purely static or purely kinetic. This is temporal typography.

Unlike static typography, these forms are not bound by one iteration within a singular viewing experience. Similar to kinetic type, temporal typography carries the stamp of time but is not relegated movement or time-based media.

Temporal letterforms have the ability to manifest themselves in both static and kinetic ways, as well as physical and digital ways, and therefore cannot be evaluated by the same functional factors of traditional typography: legibility and readability. Viewership and perception are elevated, and formal and experiential conditions are re-prioritized as the forms transition from one state to the next.

As a means of mapping the territory of temporal typography and setting parameters for my explorations, I have identified and defined three independent qualities of temporal type: transitory, navigable, and medial. My studies examine these characteristics as distinct from one another allowing me to explore the boundaries and define intrinsic qualities of temporal typography.

FOREWORD



“The child is indifferent to practical meanings since he looks at everything with fresh eyes, and he still has the natural ability to absorb everything as such.”

— Wassily Kandinsky

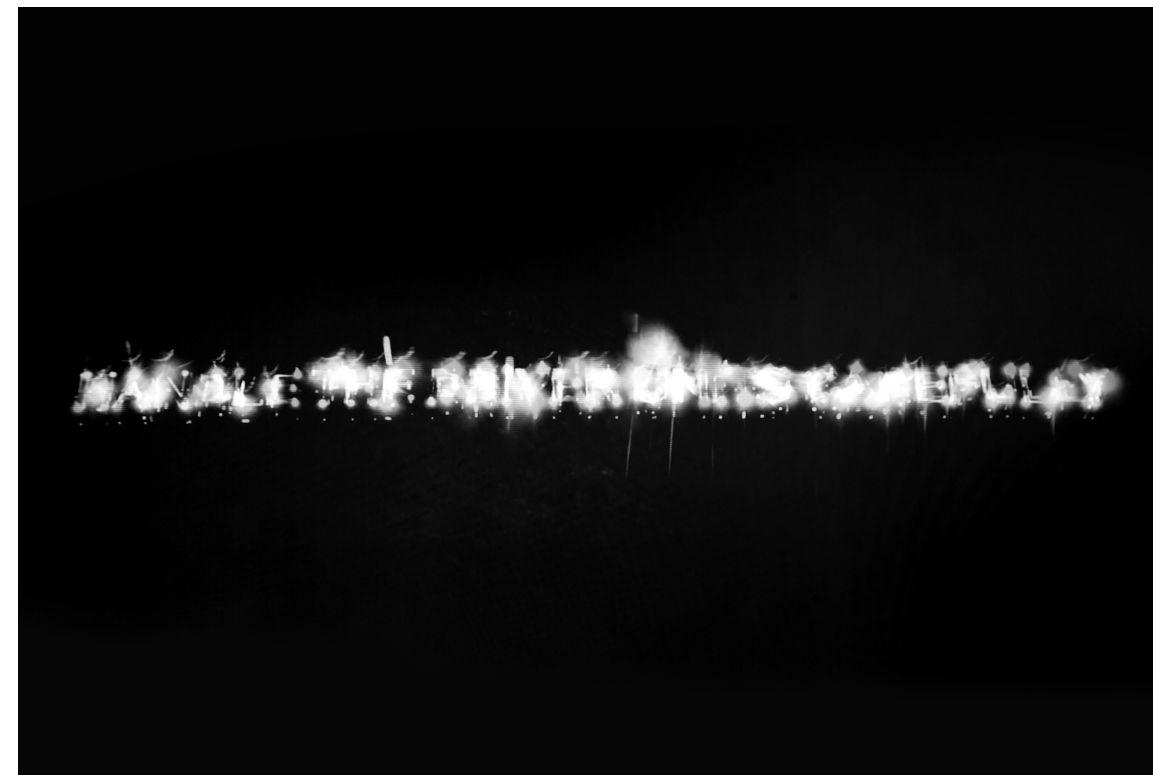
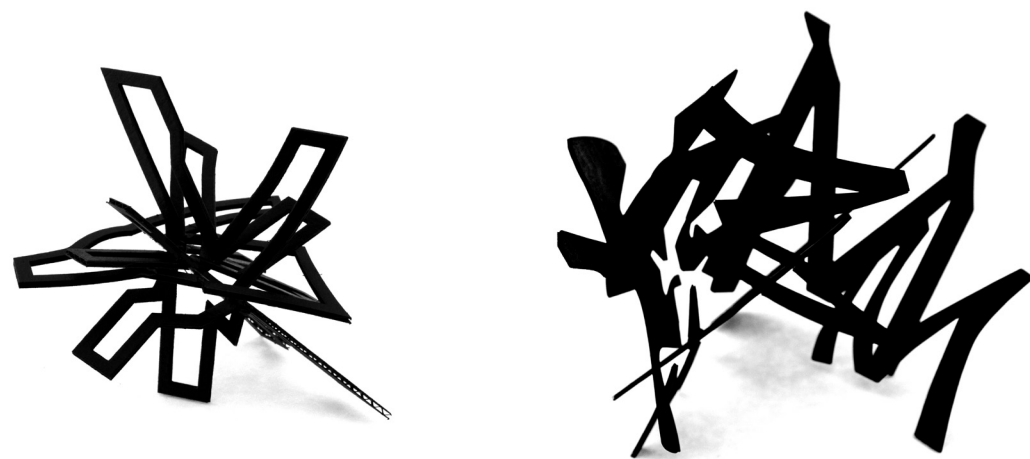
Very little is unexplored in the world of typography. Volumes have been written regarding what constitutes “good” or “bad” typography and there are entire conferences, meet-ups, and events dedicated to the beautiful forms we know as letters. Until only a few years ago, the field of typography was somewhat of a mystery to those who lived outside of the graphic design community. When the computer became affordable to households, this mystery began to open, however it could be said that the tipping point happened in 2007 when the documentary Helvetica on the “proliferation of one typeface” was released, it spurred conversations inside and outside of the design community about how type affects our lives and plays a major role in the decisions we make as consumers. Thanks to the internet, design forums and entire communities go up in arms when a major brand changes its primary typeface or brand font. No one can excuse themselves from having an opinion on particular typeface and everyone, it seems, has a favorite font.

Matthias Hillner

Matthias Hillner founded Studio for Virtual Typography, conducted a three-year study into the aesthetic qualities of time-based typography at the Royal College of Art in London. The results of this study are published in form of a book entitled as "Virtual Typography". virtualtypography.com

The field of typography and letterforms can be a tricky one to navigate, most notably because it's tied directly to the larger context of the words and language in which it lives. Ever since the advent of movable type by Johannes Gutenberg around 1439 — and also before, but particularly after — text has increasingly replaced imagery as a means of communication. It could be argued that images are more efficient because they can be perceived at a glance, and do not necessarily depend on an individual's particular language to be perceived. For example, the universal symbol for "do not enter," a red circle with a white bar in the center, can be grasped more quickly than the words "do not enter." Matthias Hillner states in his book *Virtual Typography* "The more complex an image is, there more room there is for interpretation and potential misinterpretation. People say a picture is worth a thousand words, but it is as if these thousands of words are all spoken simultaneously without any particular structure involved." (p. 9)

Historically, artists and designers have sought to create typography that is capable of communicating more than just semantic information; it is "capable of performance and behaviour." As a graphic designer, I've always found myself exploring the various qualities, characteristics, and even eccentricities of



An early investigation into temporal forms using the laser cutter

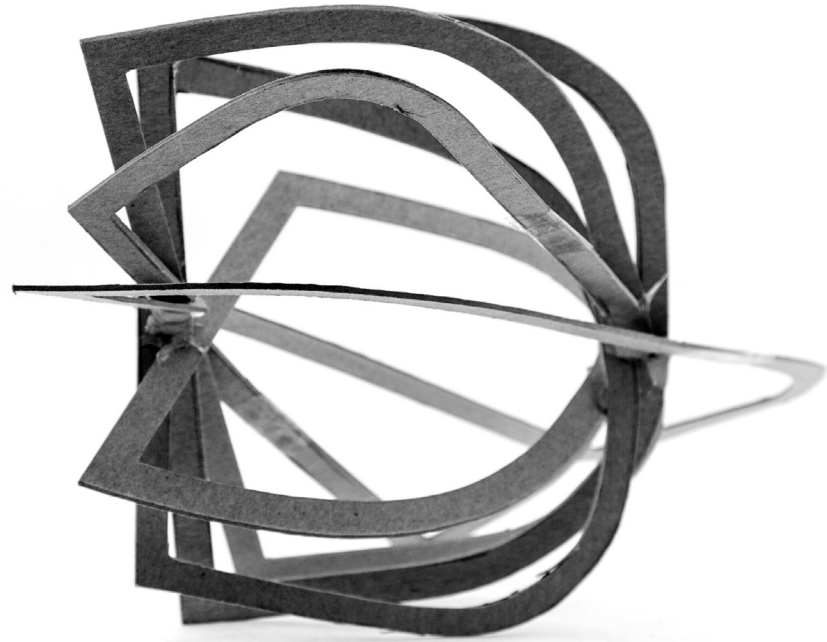
typography. At the beginning of this research, I began looking into alternate ways of looking at letterforms and experienced several false starts down the very narrow — and controversial — path of conceptual typography. There are many problems with conceptual typography as Peter Bil'ak states "...let's be clear that conceptual type is an oxymoron. A typeface can't really be conceptual because it is dependent on its execution." (2011) When David Carson famously set an entire article in Zapf Dingbats in a 1994 issue of Ray Gun he may have singlehandedly proved that conceptual typography, or in this case, illegible typography, is a non sequitur. I quickly realized that conceptual typography is not the space I was interested in exploring, it is much closer to something that Hillner coined as virtual typography. The term virtual typography is most often referred to as type in digital space, however that reference is a feeble generalization of one application. A more accurate definition of virtual typography occurs when the two terms are broken down into their individual definitions: virtual defined by the Merriam Webster Dictionary as "being such in essence or effect though not formally recognized or admitted"

Peter Bil'ak

Peter Bil'ak is a Slovakian graphic and typeface designer, based in The Hague, and The Netherlands. He is the head of the type foundry Typotheque. peterbilak.com

David Carson

David Carson is an American graphic designer, best known for his innovative magazine design, and use of experimental typography. While working at the alternative music and lifestyle magazine, Ray Gun, he set an interview with Bryan Ferry in Zapf Dingbats because he thought it was boring.



and typography being “the style, arrangement, or appearance of printed letters on a page [or screen].” In this case, virtual typography can be defined as form that shows the essence of or can be nearly, but not completely, described as typography.

Virtual Typography

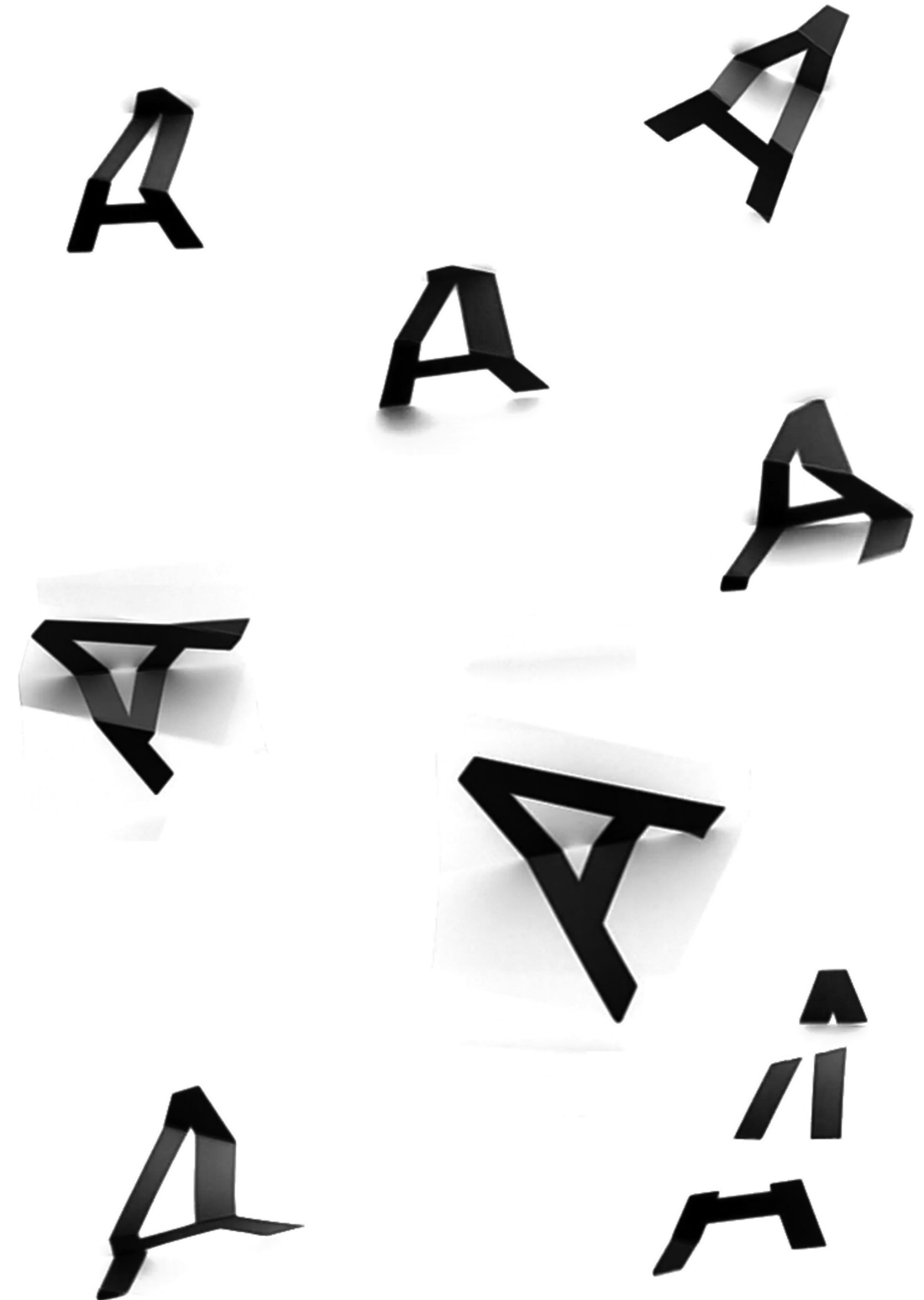
virtual (adj)

1. very close to being something without actually being it
2. existing or occurring on computers or on the Internet

typography (n)

1. the work of producing printed pages from written material
2. the style, arrangement, or appearance of printed letters on a page

Virtual type, or “information that evolves gradually into typography instead of relating the term to virtual environments” encompasses a very large swath of alternate typographic moves that defy the traditional Modernist approach. Virtual typography requires the process of perception, time-based movement and structural decoding (just to name a few) in order to fully experience and understand its typographic forms. Although many of the approaches and for generating virtual typography were not new to me, the notion of this space was new. The territory of virtual type encompassed many of the qualities and modes of perception that had originally pulled me into the murky waters of conceptual typography but it did not include the essential problem of conceptual type, being that the term conceptual is most often “synonymous with ‘idea’ or ‘intention’...and is therefore in danger of being confused with the author’s intention.”





The speculative aspect of forms that are virtually typographic and their phenomenological qualities open up an entirely new realm of what is possible when dealing with the issue of type. In these cases, the conventions of legibility, readability, and usability are not completely tossed aside, perhaps it is acknowledged that the purpose of letterforms and other forms that are created in the process are not simply functional by principle. It is important to recognize that interaction with a letterforms and a piece of text is traditionally simultaneous. We look at words on a page or on the screen, creating an easily reproducible singular, experience. There is larger and much more compelling potential to convey additional meaning and information over the course of time by utilizing cognitive perception, phenomenology, and the ideas behind complexity theory. Conversely, what happens when the forms are entropic and devolve or meaning is lost over the course of time? Is meaning and perception gathered overtime and only becomes apparent in the culmination of form, or is all information present at the point of origin and completely decay to its end? These are all questions I began asking myself as I moved into a field of exploration that I am calling Temporal Typography.

While I am certainly not the first to explore this territory, it is still a relatively undefined and unfamiliar area. There are designers who unknowingly creating work that fall into this odd sector of typography and while a few have sought to define the field, there isn't necessarily an agreement amongst them what exactly designates temporal type. What you will see in the pages to come are a variety explorations and studies that seek to narrow and help define the rather vague and unexplored territory.

Phenomenology

The study of “phenomena” : appearances of things, or things as they appear in our experience, or the ways we experience things, thus the meanings things have in our experience. Phenomenology studies conscious experience as experienced from the subjective or first person point of view.

— Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy

Complexity Theory

“Complexity theory... attempt[s] to reconcile the unpredictability of non-linear dynamic systems with a sense of underlying order and structure.”

— David Levy, Applications and Limitations of Complexity Theory in Organizational Theory and Strategy

Cognition

Conscious mental activities : the activities of thinking, understanding, learning, and remembering

— Merriam Webster

METHODOLOGY + PROCESS



WAYS OF WORKING

THINKING THROUGH MAKING

Making is essential to the work of designers and artists. While there are a variety of methodologies for creating work, I've found that my system of making or creating involves making as a crucial step in all parts of the design process, including when I am thinking through ideas. I call this thinking through making. The practice of thinking through making allows me to create work with a simple idea in mind allows me to explore a broad variety of investigations into a single subject quickly. This process of making liberates me from concerning myself too incredibly with the deeper concept behind the work, freeing me to examine a variety of solutions within a single idea.

WORKING FLUIDLY BETWEEN 2D + 3D

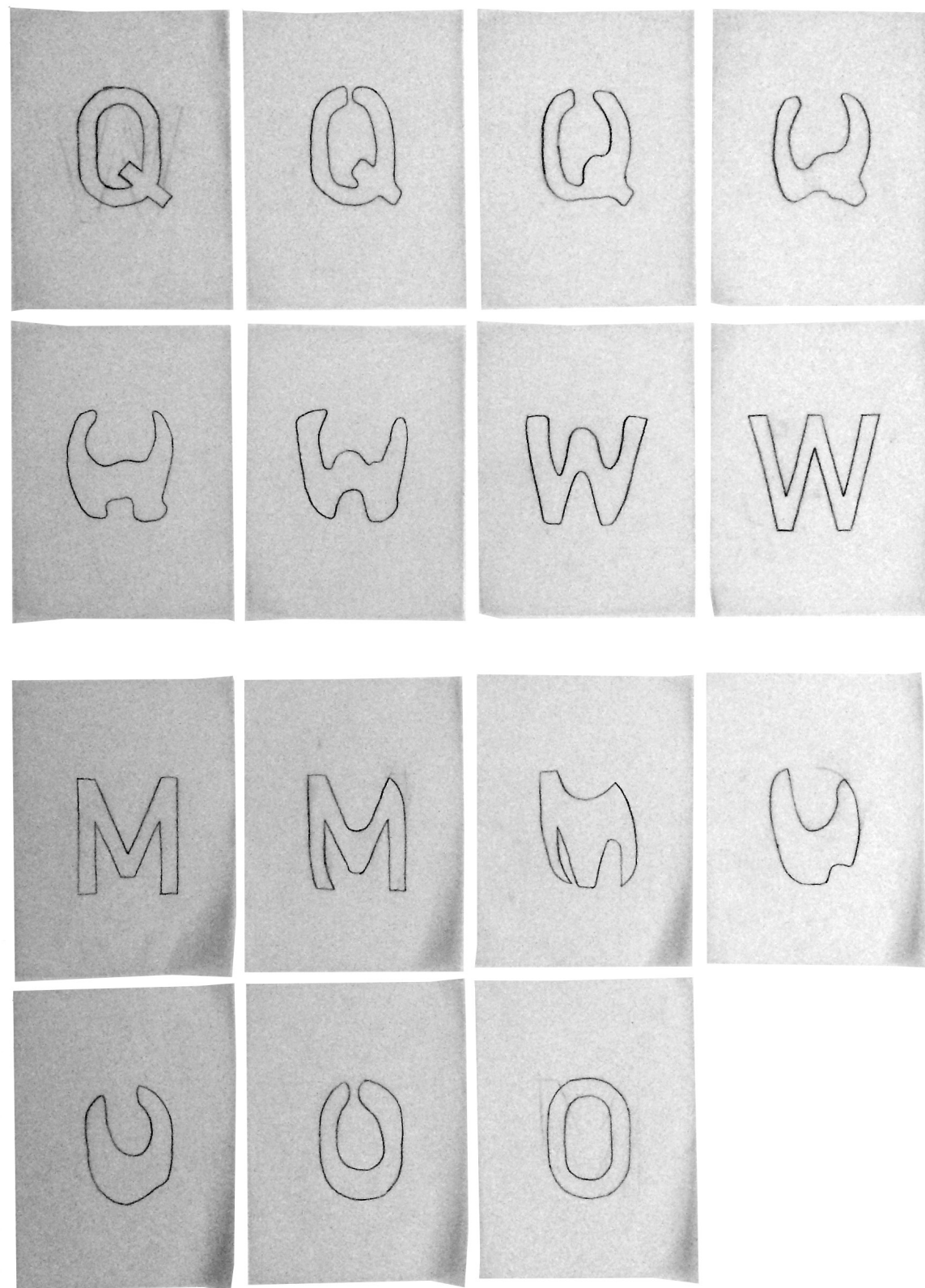
The process of making and creating work within the spheres of two and three dimensions allows me to both digitally and physically play with the notions of how the human brain is able to conceptualize and envision elements of a flat, planar form, seeing them as three dimensional, or vice versa. By exploring the primary qualities of temporal typography (navigable, medial, and transitory) through the 2D and 3D lens provides a

variety of ways to enrich the potential of both realms. Through working in this manner, I've also found the one process of working tends to inform the other and many times provides the next step that should take place in order to move the work forward.

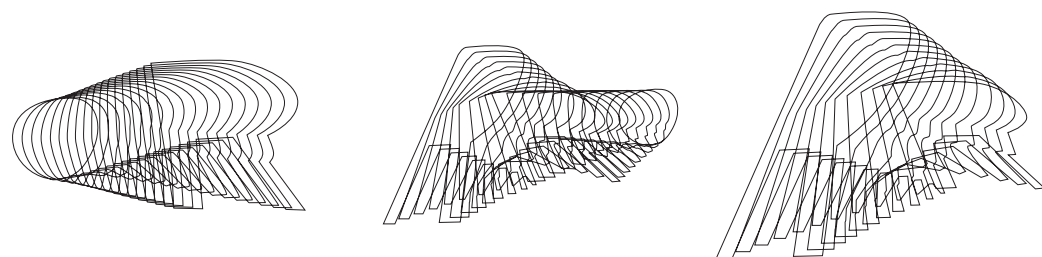
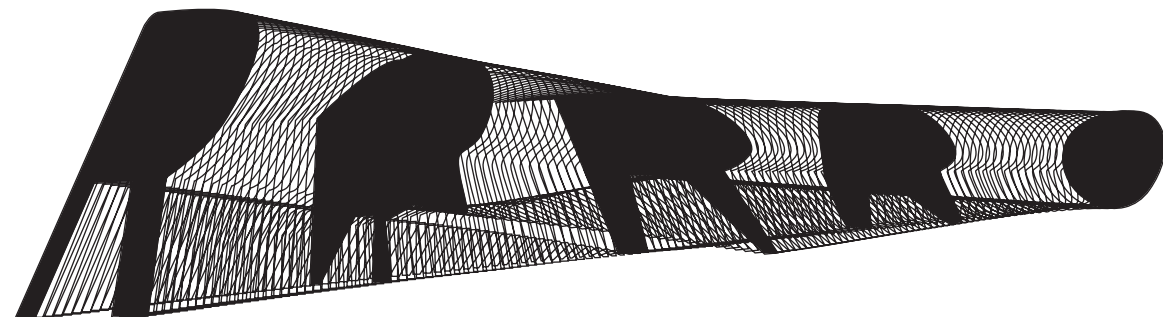
SUBVERTING THE STANDARD

A large majority of the body of work that I've generated through explorations into temporal typography has only been possible due to a willingness to consciously work against the universally accepted typographic principles that designers have come to rely on. When dealing with asemic, virtually typographic and temporal form it is impossible to allow these standards to guide the research — in fact, these standards must be subverted. However in seeking to resolve the issue of temporal typography in the world of graphic design, it was necessary to find a way to merge the typographic principles that I was intentionally subverting with the work that I had created. This method of attempt to merge a combination of accepted and unaccepted principles has generated delightful results that would not have been possible otherwise.





PRECURSORS TO TEMPORAL TYPOGRAPHY



SHIFTING THE FOCUS

LETTERFORMS & LEGIBILITY

Throughout the course of this book, I will use pre-existing typographic terms as a means of connecting and conveying the ideas I am trying to express about temporal typography. The word typography for example is used to describe the letterforms, not necessarily the arrangement and appearance of letterforms, which is the more common use of the term. That noted, the manner in which I use these terms will oftentimes not directly represent, and may even be in opposition to the standard typographic notions of how these terms are typically used.

One particular example will be my use of “letterform”. The Merriam Webster Dictionary defines a letterform as “the shape of a letter [a symbol usually written or printed representing a speech sound and constituting a unit of an alphabet] especially from the standpoint of design or development” however for the purposes of this book, the definition of letterform will be used much more loosely. In many cases, “letterform” and “form” will be used interchangeably as a way of acknowledging this discrepancy.

Legibility in typography is concerned with how easy it is to distinguish or recognize individual letterforms. In practice, the more simple a typeface is the more legible it is. One of the fundamental principles of typography is that it is meant to be read and carry a particular message. The term readability refers to the ease at which a viewer is able to digest or scan larger bodies of text. Historically, with some exceptions, great emphasis has been placed on the idea that type should be legible, typeset in a readable manner, and that it is simply a vehicle for the message it carries. Beatrice Warde, in her famous essay *The Crystal Goblet* asserts that type should essentially

What is a Letter?

“The concept of a letter turns out to be something other than a form in an idealized sense... the letter is a set of constrained parameters within a defined system of elements, a set of protocols by which a form is called forth.”

— Johanna Drucker (p. 16)

Beatrice Warde / The Crystal Goblet

Beatrice Warde was an American typographic expert, best known for her essay 'The Crystal Goblet', and the broadsheet 'This is a Printing Office'. She was a prolific writer, researcher, public speaker, and first female member of the Type Directors Club.

be invisible. While there are certainly movements of artists and designers — particularly the visual poets, Dada and Futurists, and designers like David Carson and Neville Brody — who have rebelled against this notion, for the most part typography lives as a slave to add meaning and enhance its content rather than to stand on its own aside from the message it carries.

Due to the intrinsically fluid nature of temporal typography, letterforms can be perceived or are physically in various states of transformation resulting in forms that may be in complete discord of legibility. When dealing with fluidity in temporal typography, legibility is continually in flux, meaning that legibility is a process that occurs (in various measure) as long as the form is mutating. Legibility assumes the viewer of the type is attempting to read, but temporal type is less focused on readership and more focused on viewership. When temporal letterforms are in flux they may transform from legible letterforms to forms that are asemic, or forms that are not tied to specific semantic content.



Asemisis

“The otherness of asemic signs may create a level of discomfort for the reader...This sense of discomfort provokes audiences to seek a solution by searching for meaning.”

— Barbara Brownie, Transforming Type: New Directions in Kinetic Typography

Legibility and Readability

Legibility is the quality of type that affects the perceptibility of a word, line, or paragraph of printed matter (Merriam Webster)

Legibility must not be confused with readability in that readability is the ease with which a reader can recognize words, sentences, and paragraphs.

Reading vs. Viewing

One of the fundamental principles of typography is that it is meant to be read. However this is not the case within the realm of temporal type. Because of it’s transitory, navigable, and medial characteristics, and fluid nature, temporal letterforms are continually in flux, which in turn challenges legibility and the capacity for readership for its viewers. Legibility and illegibility, recognition and perception are continually fluctuating, allowing viewership

Asemic letterforms typically feel strangely familiar and live on the edge of legibility, masquerading as legible as a way of preparing and challenging the viewer to seek coherence and meaning in their form. On the furthest pole of transformation, the form may be completely unrecognizable as a letterform or any sort of symbol. Therefore, legibility and readership within temporal type is not necessarily a state meant to be achieved, it is a process. This process and mode of understanding and requires an extended period of observation and perception forcing the viewer to constantly evaluate past and present conditions of the form, and even speculate on future form in order to gather meaning or message within the type.

If legibility is not the primary focus of temporal typography, then the emphasis of readability or readership become subordinate at certain times as well. Factors of viewership include perception and perspective. When perception is triggered as a means to engage with temporal type, a constant fluctuation of past, present, and future form, requiring a continual rationalization about what is being seen. The perspective or viewpoint determines the angle at which the form is seen and due to the transitory nature of temporal typography, the perception and perspective of these forms may also be fluid, necessitating the viewer to move or change position in relation to the form that is being portrayed.

IMPLICATIONS OF TEMPORAL TYPE

It would not be strange for one to wonder how temporal type differs from type in motion (i.e. film title sequences, etc) and it some cases, type in motion could even adhere to the qualities and characteristics of temporal typography that have been laid out in this book. There are, however a few determining factors that differentiate standard type in motion and temporal typography, the two primary determinants being viewership (which is re-prioritized to align with or be preferred above readership) and local — as opposed to global — kineticism. It should be noted that these considerations are based on the notion that temporal typography cannot be evaluated with the same typographic standards that are applied to basic static and kinetic typography.

and perception to be re-prioritized as the letterform transitions from one state to the next.

While type in motion or kinetic type may appreciate the viewing experience more than static typography, it ultimately stands as the vehicle that is meant to carry a particular message that can be read. Viewership may be essential to the experiencing the type that has been set in motion, but ultimately, viewership is not prioritized above legibility.

Global vs. Local

A large majority of type in motion relies primarily on the kineticism of an entire word or phrase rather than individual letters within the whole. This technique focuses on manipulating global elements and their relationship to the frame in which they are portrayed, rather than concentrating on the relationships between singular letterforms as well as the design of specific facets of the form itself. Barbara Brownie, in her book Transforming Type: New Directions in Kinetic Typography, relates the difference between global and local kineticism to the roles of a typographer and a type designer. She says, “In designing the shapes of individual letters, the type designer must be primarily concerned with the letterform itself. The typographer, however as he or she lays letters alongside one another on a page, must be primarily concerned with the relationship between

letters: their spacing, hierarchy, and so one. A typographer, therefore, is concerned with the global, and a type designer with the local.”

Taking into concern the matters of global and local kineticism as a matter of distinction between temporal type and type in motion, temporal type is only concerned with local — and even hyper-local — events; the problem of typography is inserted into time. Type in motion, however is more concerned with global kineticism, primarily because of the necessity for it to be legible.



THE PURPOSE OF THIS WORK

There has always been a tendency towards abstraction and obscurity in design. The seduction of ambiguity or using randomness and chance to create beautiful, compelling work is forceful — and rewarding when it is done well — but it also opens up a dangerous space where the work can become more about creating some sort of visual sensation.

Although there are many who will no doubt dismiss the explorations you see between the covers of this book (because it does not adhere to the Modernist typographic standards of legibility and readership) proclaiming that exploring a world where letterforms are illegible in any instance defies the very notion of their intent. They will label this as a self-indulgent project. And I have to confess that I would be lying if I said that throughout the process of these explorations I did not occasionally experience similar feelings. But how is it that any field — design or otherwise — can move forward without having those on the fringes who challenge the very notion of what can be accomplished within the accepted spectrum? The basis or reasoning for investigating a new territory is not always one of self-indulgence. In order to further a field or industry, notions of what is generalized as acceptable must be questioned.

Fiercely retaining and holding fast to core assumptions about what constitutes as good, bad, right, or wrong, in any field do not allow us to explore new territories. Temporal typography is not an end or even a challenge to the purpose of typography. By recognizing that there are alternatives and new opportunities for pathways of exploration that deserve to be explored, I am simply pushing the mark and possibilities of what can be accomplished through type to a new place as a means of expanding the boundary of what is accepted in the typographic arena.

Modernist Typography

Modern Typography was a reaction against the bold, stylistic typography and design of the late 19th century. For the modernist designer it is essential to give pure and direct expression to the content. The trademark of modern typography is neutral sans serif typeface.

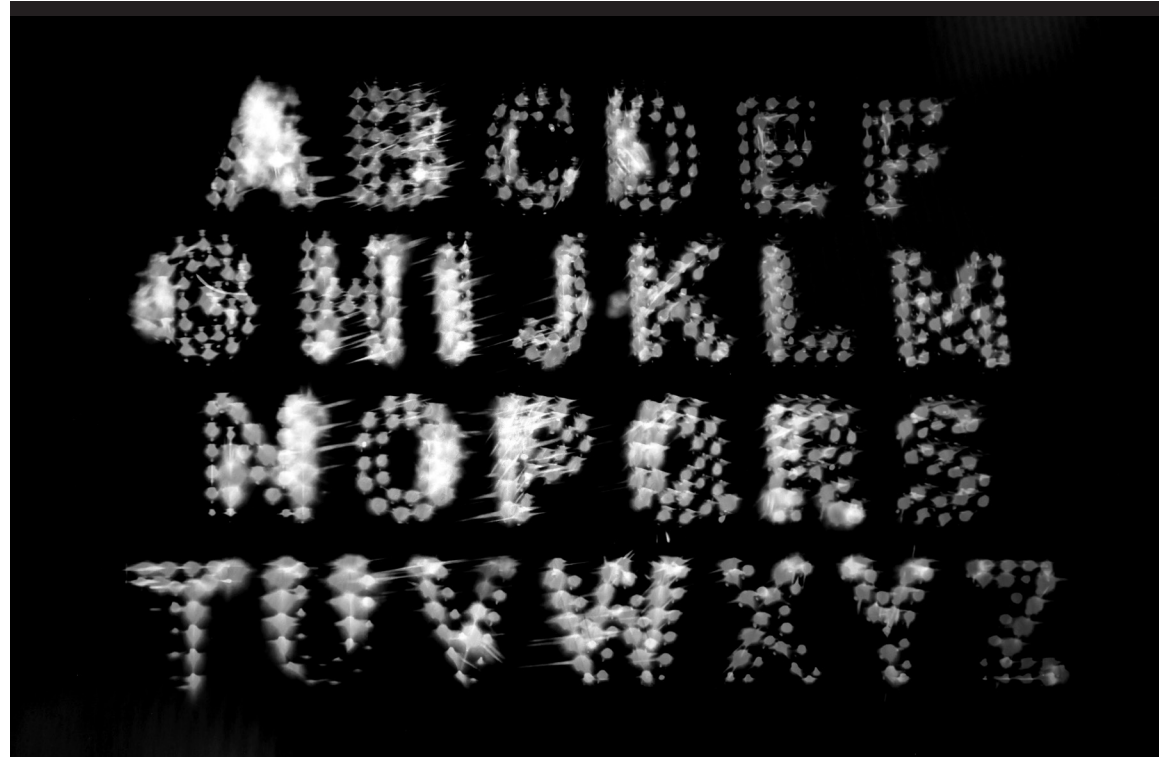
INITIAL EXPLORATIONS IN TEMPORAL TYPOGRAPHY

TYPE
IS
TRANSITORY
TYPE
IS
TRANSITORY

INTRODUCTION

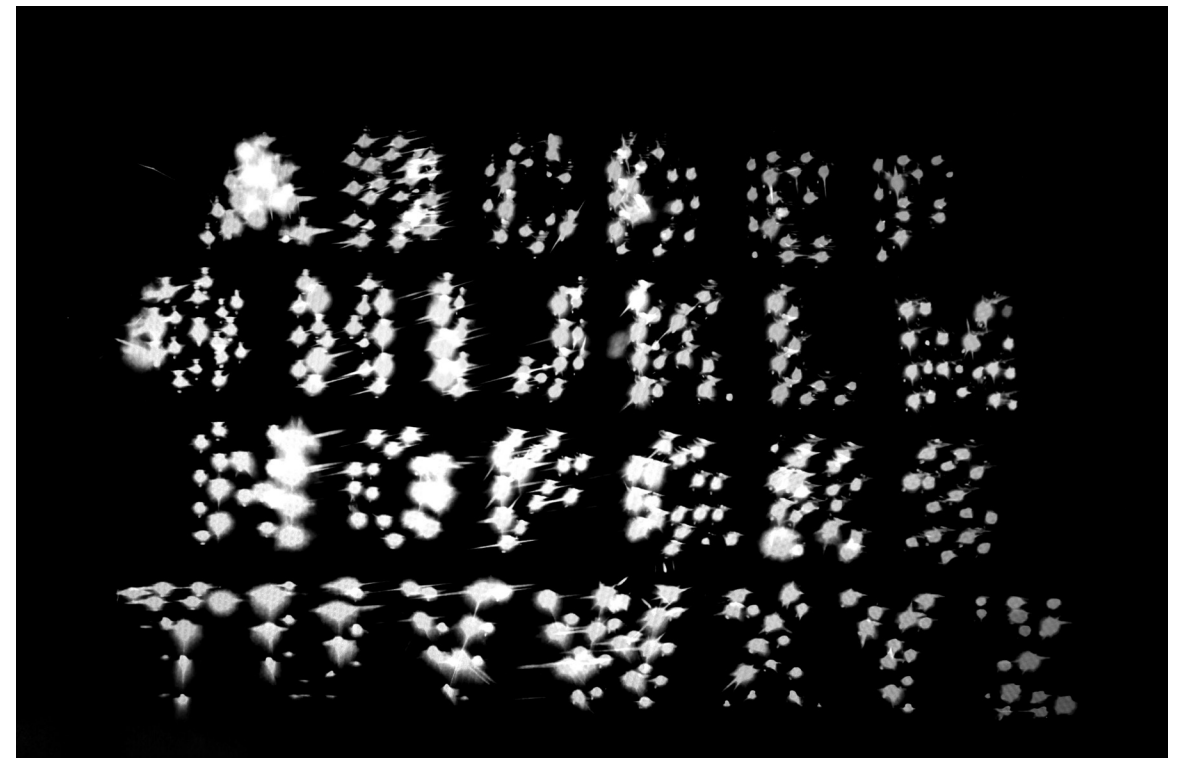
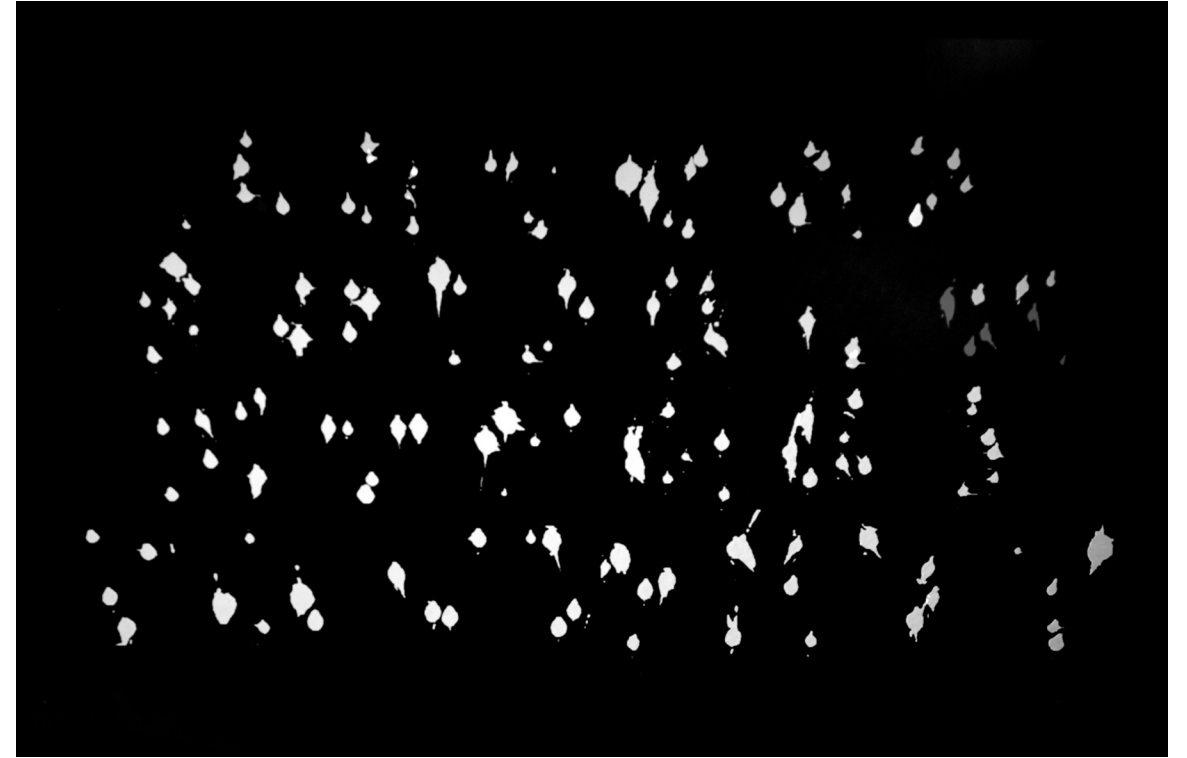
When diving into any sort of territory, explored or unexplored, there is always a point of entry, however unsure of an entry it may be. While I admittedly was completely unaware of where I was going with these initial studies, they served a specific purpose; they became a means of delving into the problem of typography when temporality is applied to the equation. The number of singular studies and explorations that took place during this period of research are simply too numerous and varied to include within this book, however what you will see is a distilled version of my investigation into temporal typography.

Undoubtedly, there are many more things to be explored and numerous pathways to be taken in the field of temporal type, this is simply an initial inquiry. There is much more to be examined than a single year of research will allow. What you see in the pages to come does not necessarily equate one-to-one with what I have defined as temporal typography, yet it is an entry point, a starting ground to understanding the effect of time and temporality on typography.



STUDIES IN LIGHT

As a starting point for my initial foray into temporal typography it seemed appropriate to utilize what I deemed to be the most elementary or basic property of temporal type: time. At that point, I was interested in capturing the process or movement of creating type and compare that with the actual result. Using the laser cutter as a tool, I captured the laser light as it cut the entire alphabet on video, then created a series of long-exposure photographs with the video set to a variety of speeds as a way to visualize the entire process in a singular viewing experience for analysis. The results captured a sense of temporality, especially when compared to one another.

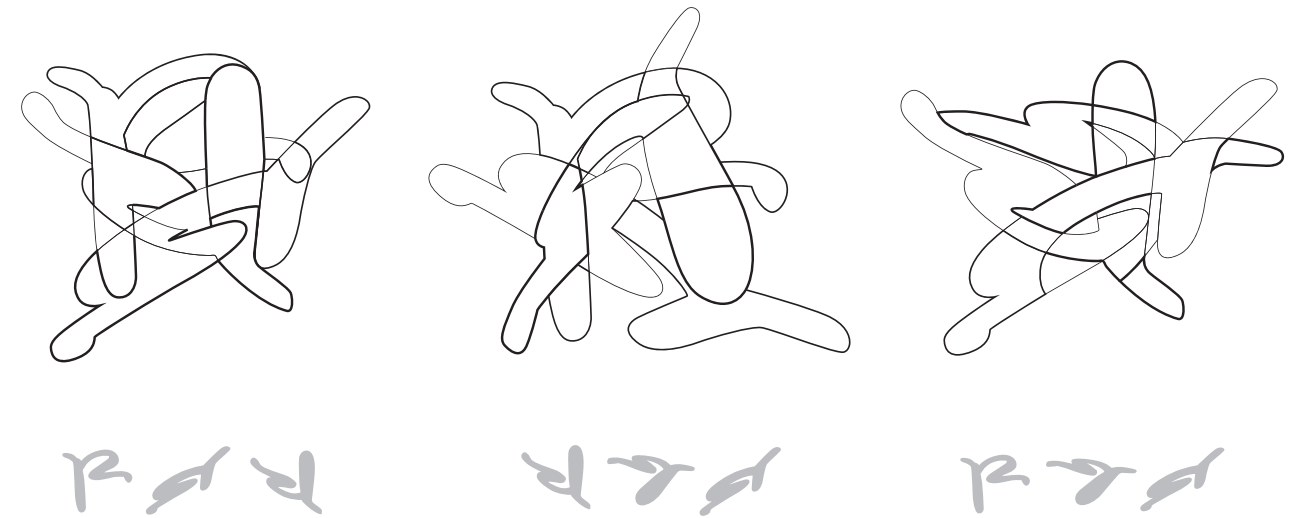


Oded Ezer

Oded Ezer is a graphic artist and typographer, best known for his typographic design fiction projects and contribution to Hebrew type design. His work explores the space between pragmatic and experimental design. odedezer.com

STUDIES IN MOVEMENT

Inspired by the visual success of the laser studies as well as the typographic studies and methodologies of Oded Ezer, I was intrigued by transitional space, and wondered how I could break typical viewing habits and challenge the pragmatic function of letterforms in three dimensions as a means to reveal additional information. My previous studies using the laser cutter employed the machine to create temporal letterforms. I wanted to use a method for creating letterforms that is anti-machine, the hand.

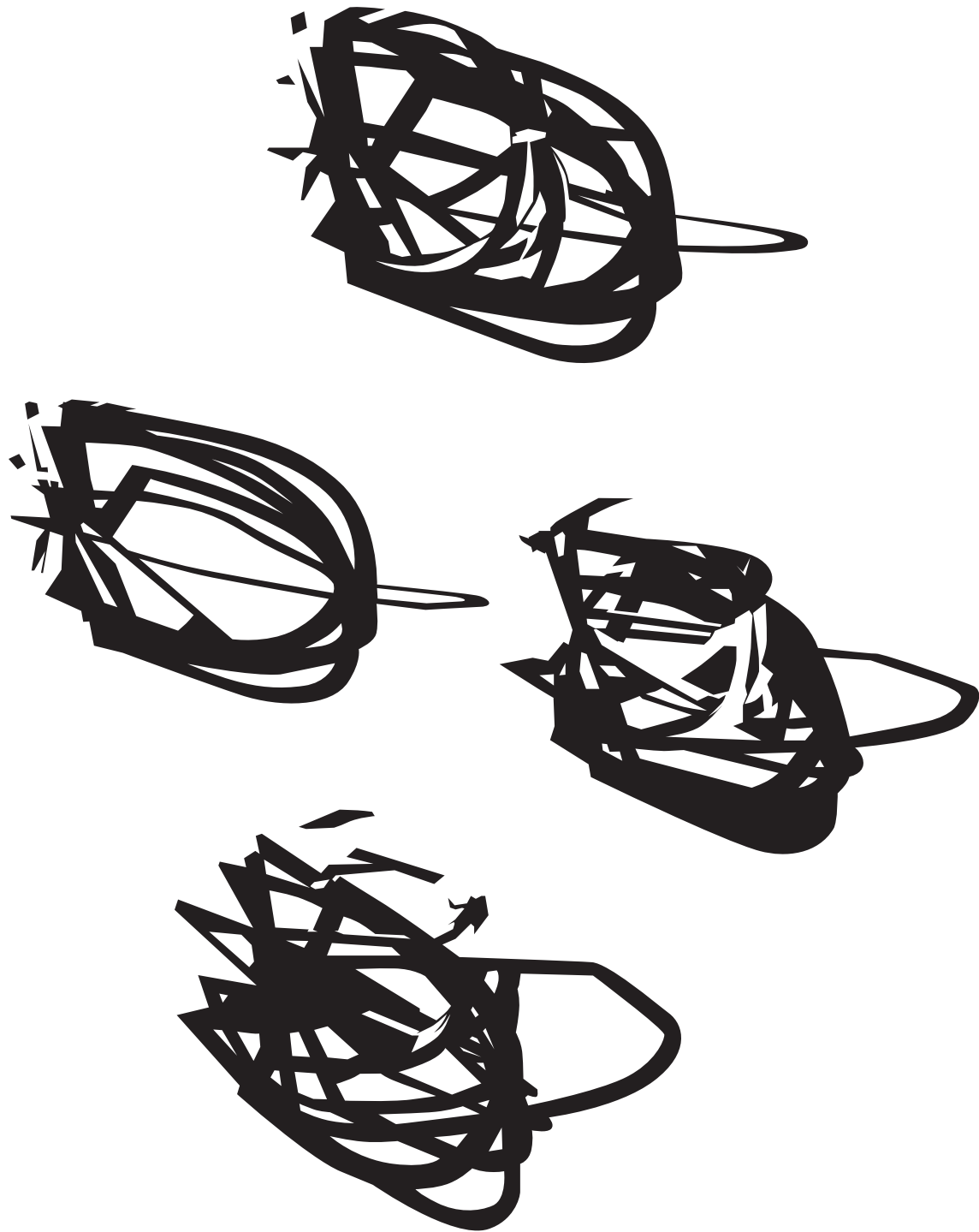


If handwriting is a means of conveying personality, graffiti conveys intention of style. In an attempt to be as non-objective as possible, I selected a single graffiti tag for the point of my investigation. My intent was to reveal the process of creation, taking a two dimensional mark into a three dimensional space. By breaking the tag down into what I perceived to be the individual letterforms of the mark, I examined the thick and thin areas of each form, deducing that the thicker sections of the forms are indications of the speed or amount of time that the artist allowed the brush or marker to linger on that particular section of the graphic. Although the three dimensional form is certainly delightful to view, it did not necessarily accomplish the purpose of revealing additional information — or the process of its creation — to viewers who were not privy to the intent of the study. A breakthrough came when I realized the delight of the three dimensional graffiti wasn't in the revelation of the process, the pleasure of viewing the form occurred when I layered the same elements that the laser studies captured onto the 3D form: time and light. Temporal forms appeared by moving a single light source around the sculptural forms to create shadows, triggering a process of perception that had been missing from the laser studies which revealed all of the information in a simultaneous manner.



A large grid of the letter 'R' in a cursive script, showing various combinations of uppercase and lowercase letters. The grid is composed of 15 rows and 15 columns, totaling 225 individual 'R' characters. The characters are arranged in a pattern that demonstrates the flexibility of the cursive script, with some letters being more upright and others more slanted or stylized. The background is a light gray grid, and the letters are black.

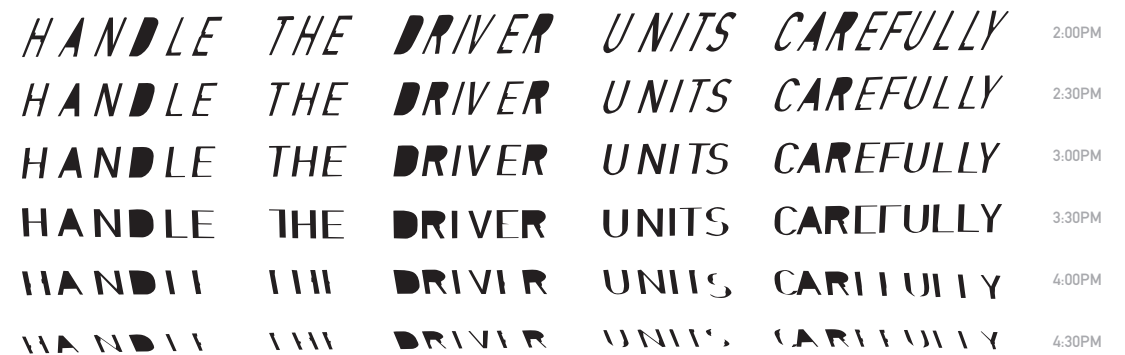




STUDIES IN SHADOW

Realizing that the concepts of time and light could be key to my methodology, I honed my next set of studies to focus on those qualities and decided to further the explorations of using movement and shadow to create new form. Being aware that type and text tends to be a slave to the message it is conveying, I selected a banal phrase from an instruction manual, “Handle the driver units carefully” and laser cut the phrase into cardboard, placed it outside and documented the letterforms that appeared in the negative space of the shadow throughout the course of the day. While the letterforms created by the passing of the sun through the negative space in the cardboard were somewhat predictable, when I layered each of the points of documentation on top of each other, they produced delightfully odd letterforms that, as static form, gave the impression of movement captured in time, creating letterforms that are greater than the sum of their individual parts.

Using a similar approach to what I had used in the graffiti study, I looked to see how I could further the studies by moving back and forth between the 2D and 3D space. Again, the results produced static three dimensional forms that provided an additional level of interaction that was more than what each individual form could convey on its own. Unlike the kinetic version, These 3D forms allows the viewer to examine and navigate the letterform, giving over kinetic control to whomever is interacting with the form. The temporal experience is different between each viewer and each individual instance.



HANDLE THE
DRIVER UNITS
CAREFULLY

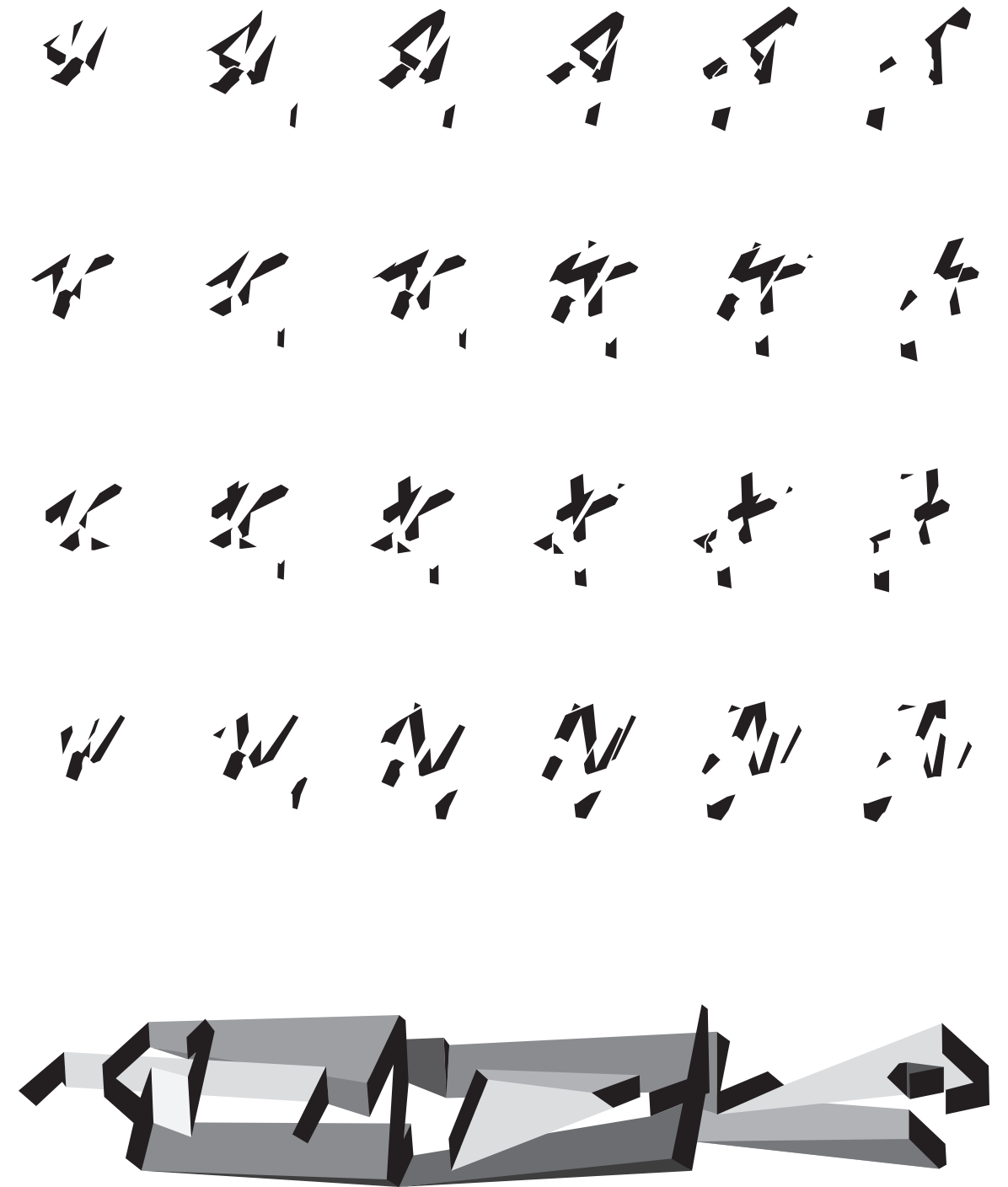
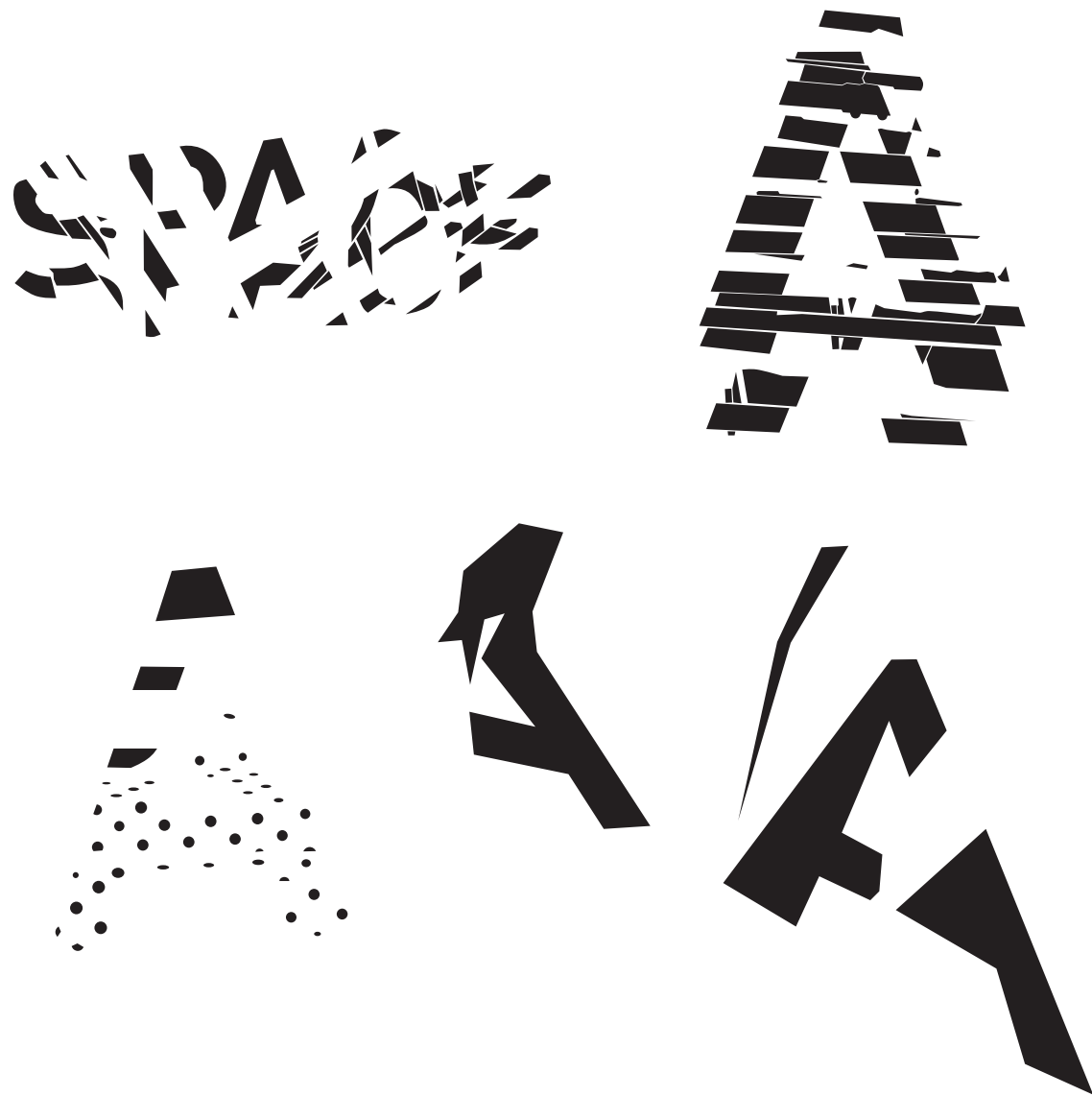
HANDLE THE
DRIVER UNITS
CAREFULLY

Phenotype

The observable properties of an organism that are produced by the interaction of the genotype and the environment.

STUDIES IN PROJECTION

Over the course of the previous studies, I was beginning to understand the nature of temporal type and started parsing a variety of characteristics that could help define and categorize the qualities of temporal typography. By projecting letterforms into a variety of spaces and environments and then manipulating them through the two and three dimensional processes and methodologies from the earlier studies, I began to more closely examine the conditions that highlighted the temporal nature of these forms. I began to see certain qualities — or to take a principle derived from biology and genetics — phenotypes, reflected by these letterforms.





TOWARDS TEMPORAL TYPE



INVESTIGATIONS INTO TEMPORAL TYPOGRAPHY

In order to focus my research over the course of just a few short months, I identified three categories that encompass innate qualities of temporal typography; medial, navigable, and transitory. Identifying and defining these three categories was necessary in order to understand the factors that separated temporal typography from static or kinetic type. While these areas are certainly not the only defining factors of temporal type, they are buckets that delineate particular attributes but also allow for a broad range of explorations and studies. Temporal letterforms may fall within one or more of these classifications and throughout the course of my research I began to push my studies in that direction.

Medial

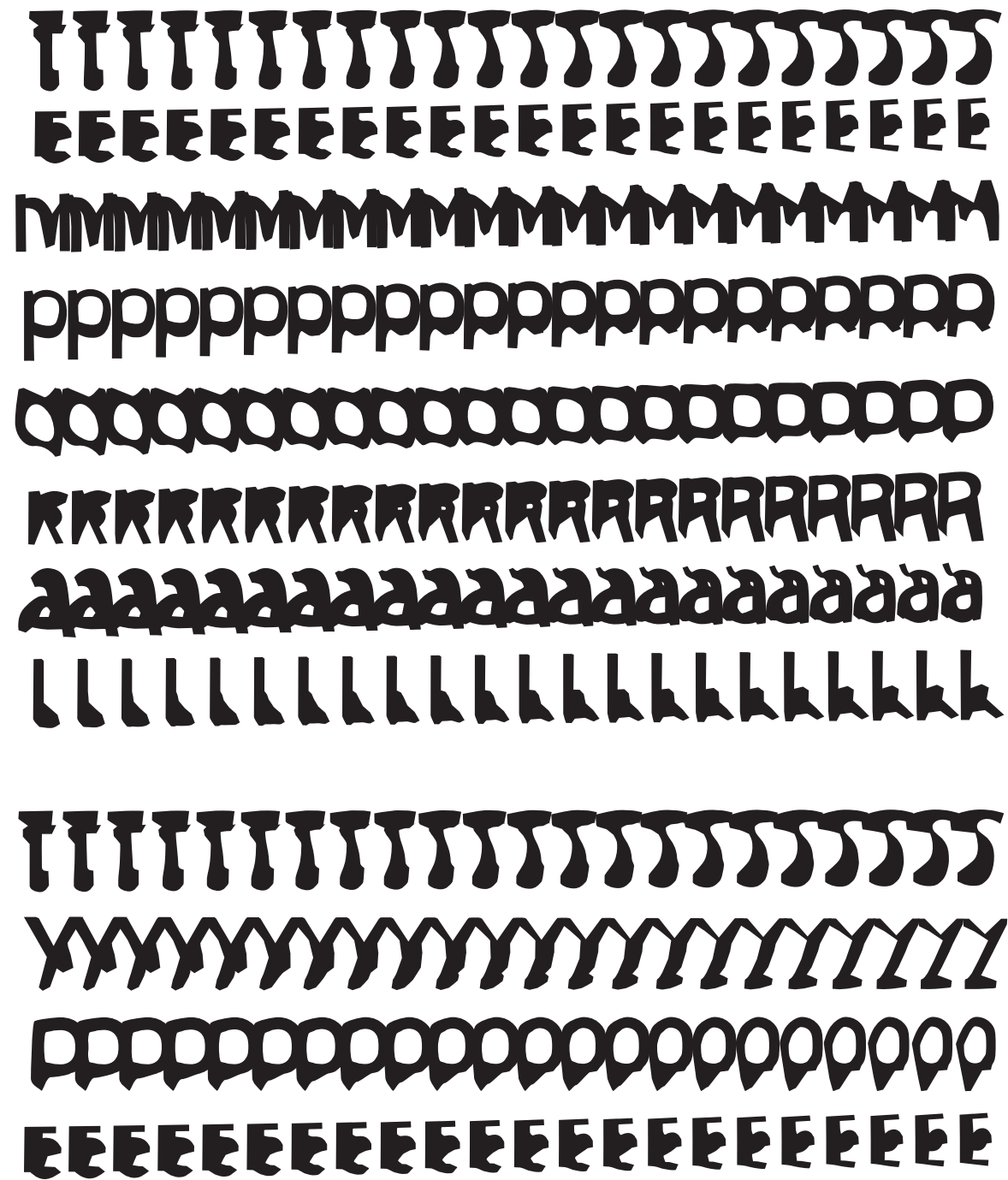
Form that is not able to be defined as absolutely typographic or pictorial. Temporal type that is medial adheres to formal principles and relies on extended observation in order to be recognized as such.

Navigable

Temporal type that is navigable typically appears in a 3D context while 2D form only gives the appearance or illusion that the form is navigable. As the viewpoint or perspective changes, the form also appears to change.

Transitory

Typographic form that lasts only for a limited amount of time. The form may appear briefly and then visually or physically disappear, or it may transition from a form that is typographic to something that is not.



MEDIAL

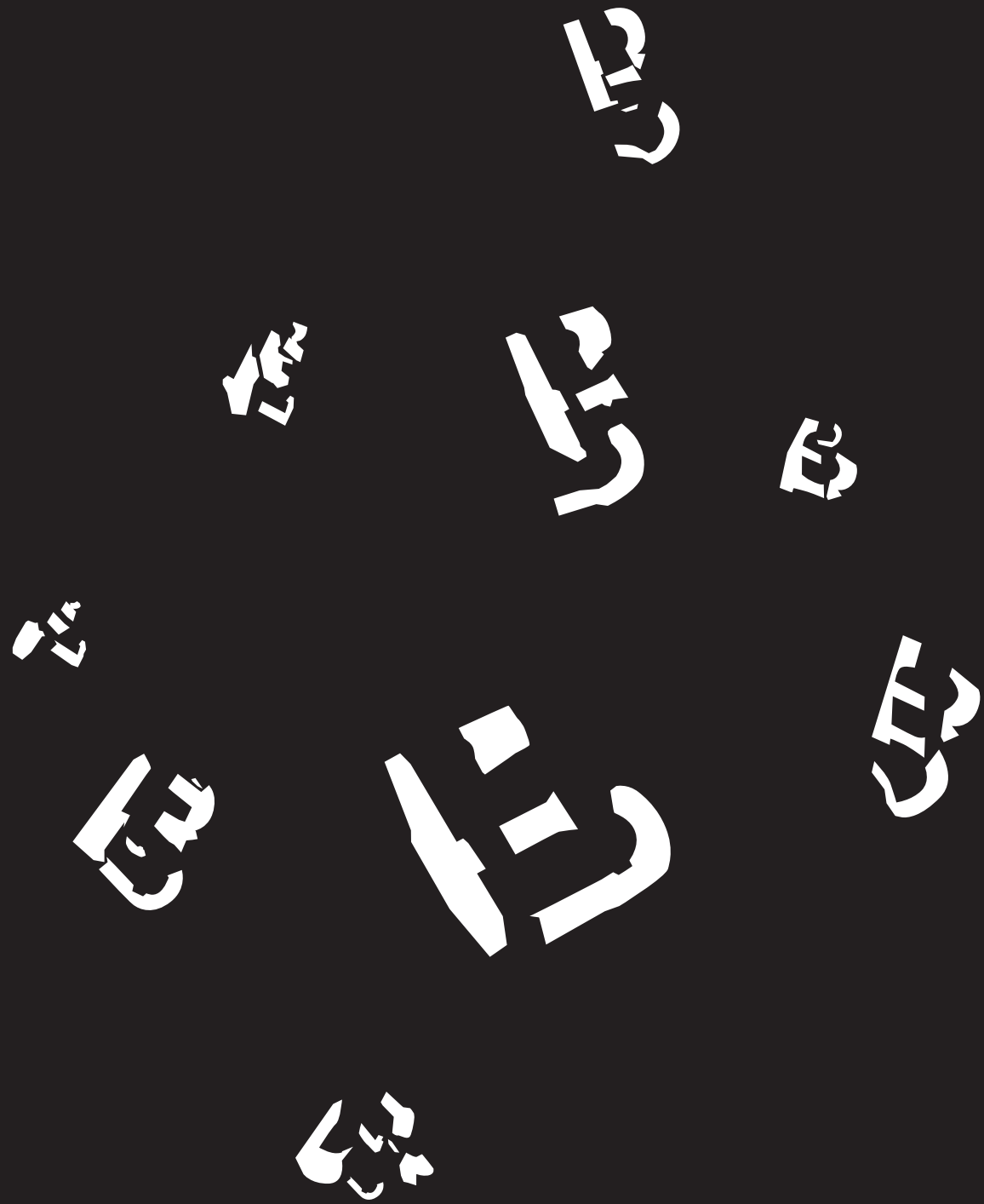
Fluidity is one of the primary signifiers of temporal typography. Individual letterforms are not necessarily restricted to a single state and have the ability to morph and reveal a new forms that are altogether different. Thus, the identity of temporal letterforms are continually in flux. As a consequence of this transformation, a unique in-between state of the letterform occurs that can be labeled as medial. Within this medial state, forms are not able to be defined as absolutely typographic or pictorial and defy conventional classification standards. Temporal type captured in the medial state adheres to purely formal principles, relying on extended observation and imagination to be recognized as a letterform.

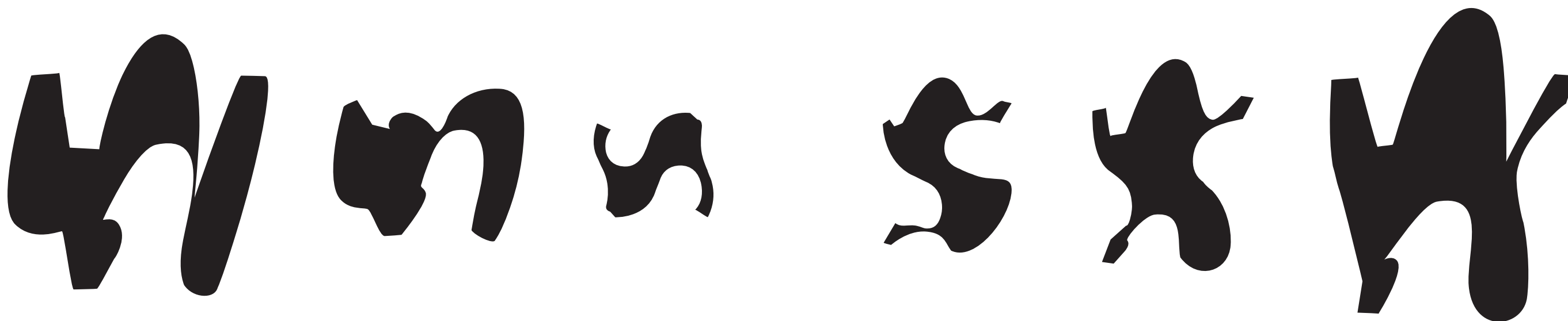
In the medial state of temporal typography, specifically, the emphasis of legibility within the field of traditional typography is re-prioritized below the formal qualities of the letterform. The issue of legibility becomes irrelevant. Exact letterform recognition or perception in the medial state is not necessarily preferred and instead relies on context and experience to determine the meaning of its particular form. In this case, Ferdinand de Saussure's theory of the semiological system comes into play. Saussure argued that a sign consists of a "signifier" and that which is "signified". The image we have in mind of an object or form is the signifier, and the actual object itself is the signified, which creates a first-order signifying system. The word or definition that we attribute to a particular object makes up the second-order signifying system. Medial forms in temporal typography undermine the semiological system; new identities are created and the signifier is not necessarily viewed in a paradigm where the medial form can be associated based on context. This state creates a reversal between the signifier and the signified, wherein the form becomes the signified rather than the signifier.

Ferdinand de Saussure / Semiological System

Ferdinand de Saussure is a Swiss linguist whose ideas on structure in language laid the foundation for much of the approach to and progress of the linguistic sciences in the 20th century.

de Saussure viewed language as a system of words and signs and asserted that the particular language spoken by a person directly affected their awareness of the world.





bfrancesi.com/ma-thesis Fig. 2.2



NAVIGABLE

Removed from the context of a flat surface with only x and y axes, and adding a z index, letterforms become spatially dimensional. Forms within a three dimensional state are able to take on structural qualities, providing the ability for the form to be viewed and explored from a variety of angles — the form becomes navigable. Additionally, there is potential for two dimensional letterforms to be navigable. In most instances, two dimensional letterforms are only able to give the appearance or illusion that their form is navigable. But what happens when a 2D form becomes physically navigable? In the case of the typographic hologram (*featured on the next page*), there is an opportunity for the two dimensional form to become physically navigable. As the viewpoint or perspective of the viewer changes, the form also appears to change.

When temporal letterforms become navigable, they allow the viewer to manipulate and experience the form. Different angles and perspectives may carry meaning that is distinct from other angles providing the ability for the viewer to gain meaning or work towards an understanding of message as the form is navigated and experienced.

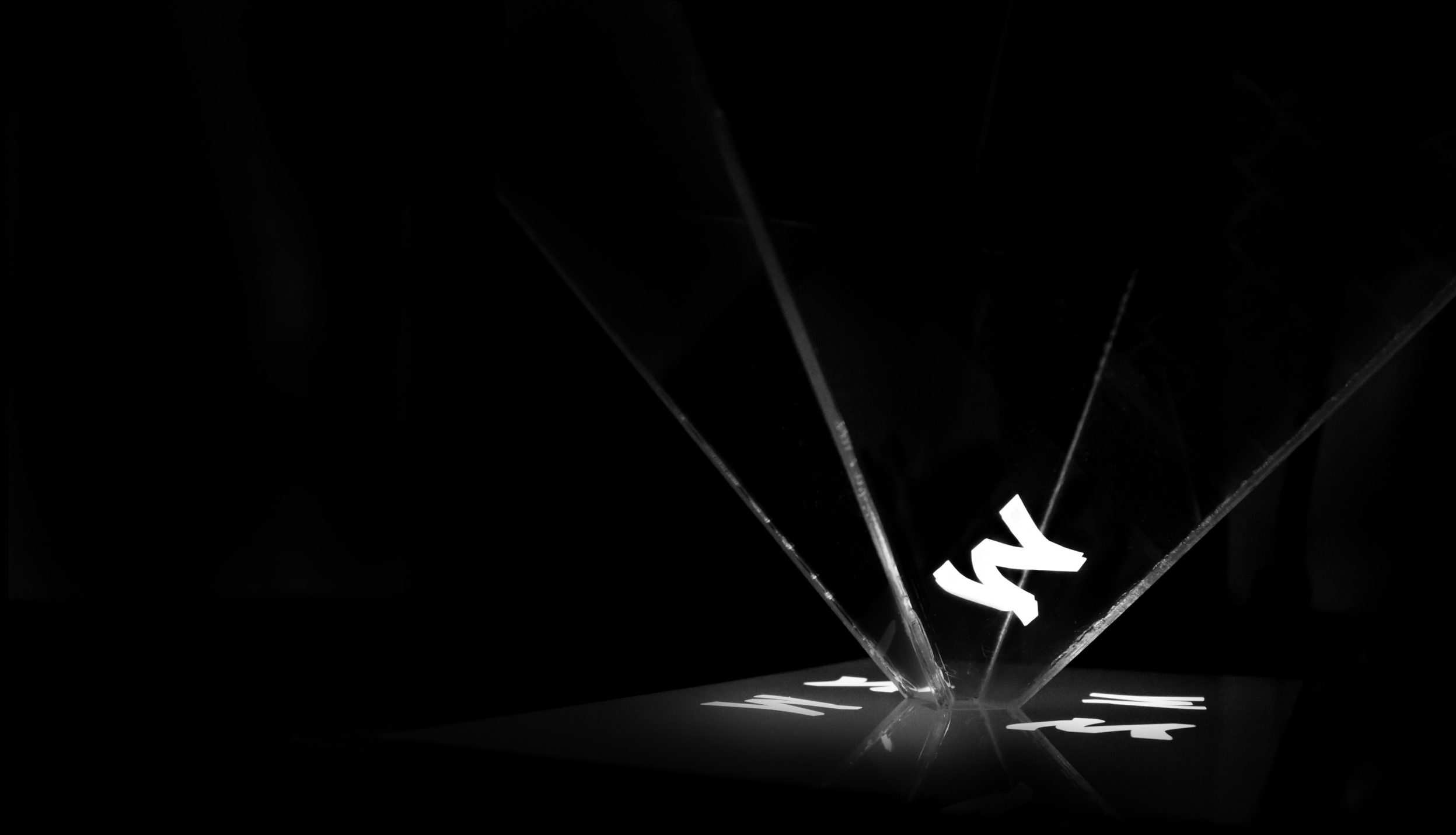
There is an explicit implication that a dimensional navigable form changes only when the viewer changes position or location. However, the more intriguing notion of a navigable form occurs when the question is posed as to whether a temporal letterform has the ability to navigate itself.

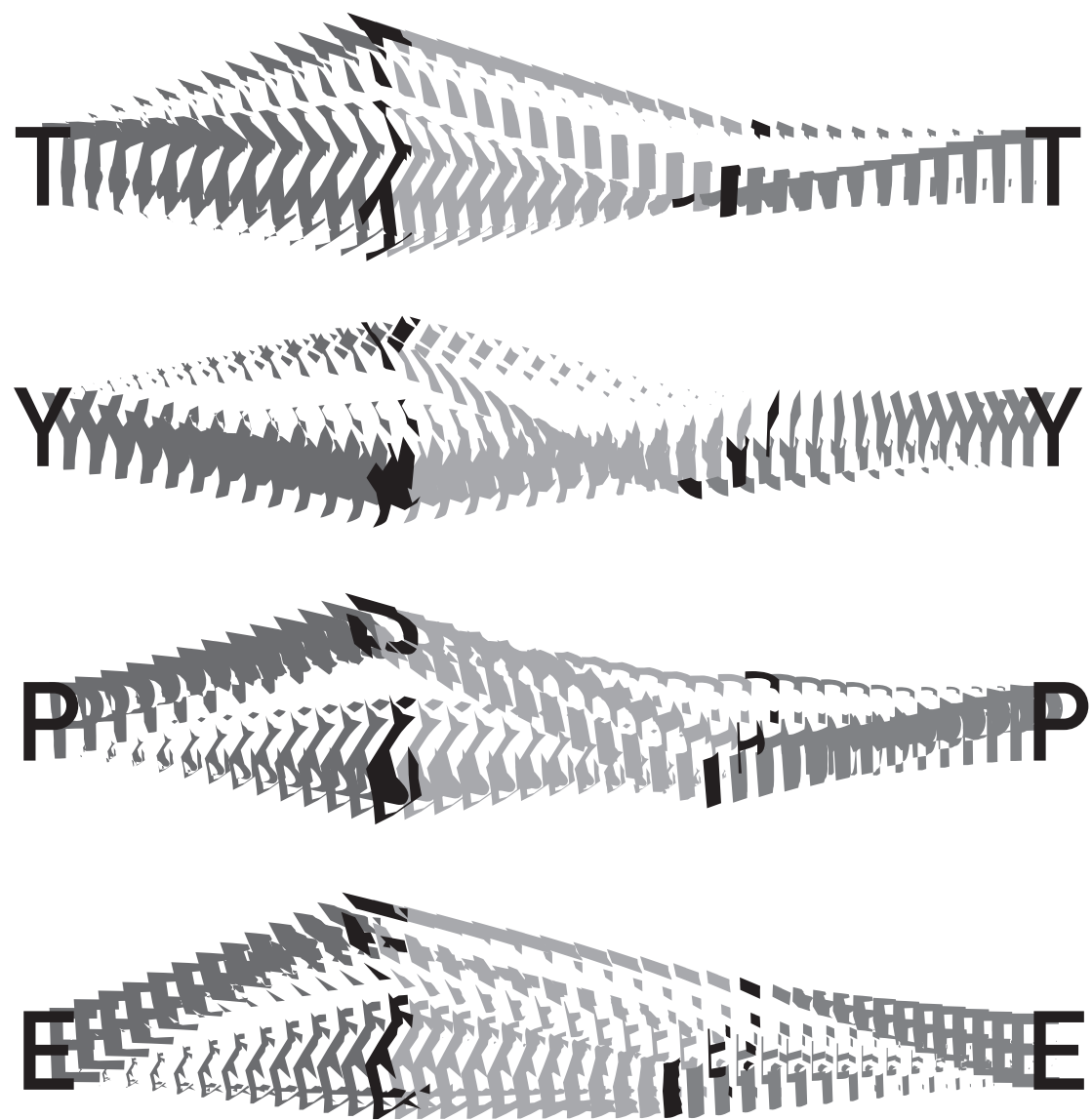
Hologram / Pepper's Ghost

Pepper's Ghost is a technique that was first invented by Giambattista della Porta in 1584 and is commonly used in theatre. Some of its famous uses include Alexander McQueen's performance with Kate Moss and Tupac's CG concert cameo. Although "hologram" is often found in the title of these display systems - they have no holographic qualities. A hologram refers to a specific medium that stores image data through a laser, a holographic substrait and interference pattern. Pepper's Ghost uses a much simpler technique that merely reflects an image off of a surface to create an illusion of a 3D object floating in physical space.

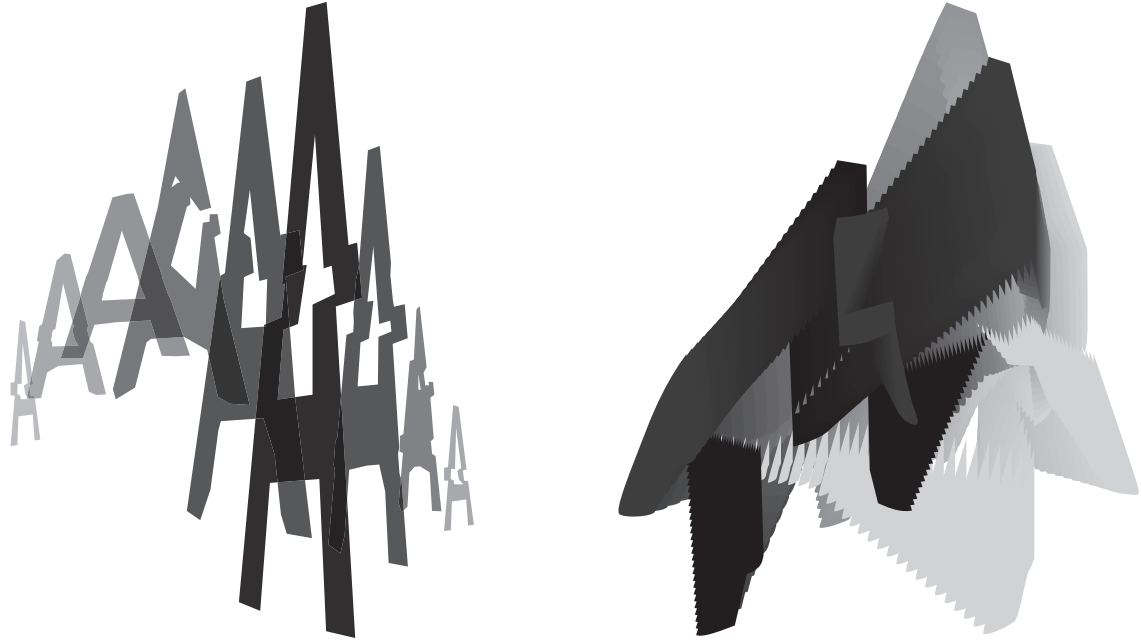
— Robbie Tilton, NYU IPT
Master's Thesis

A typographic hologram enables medial and transitory form to become navigable

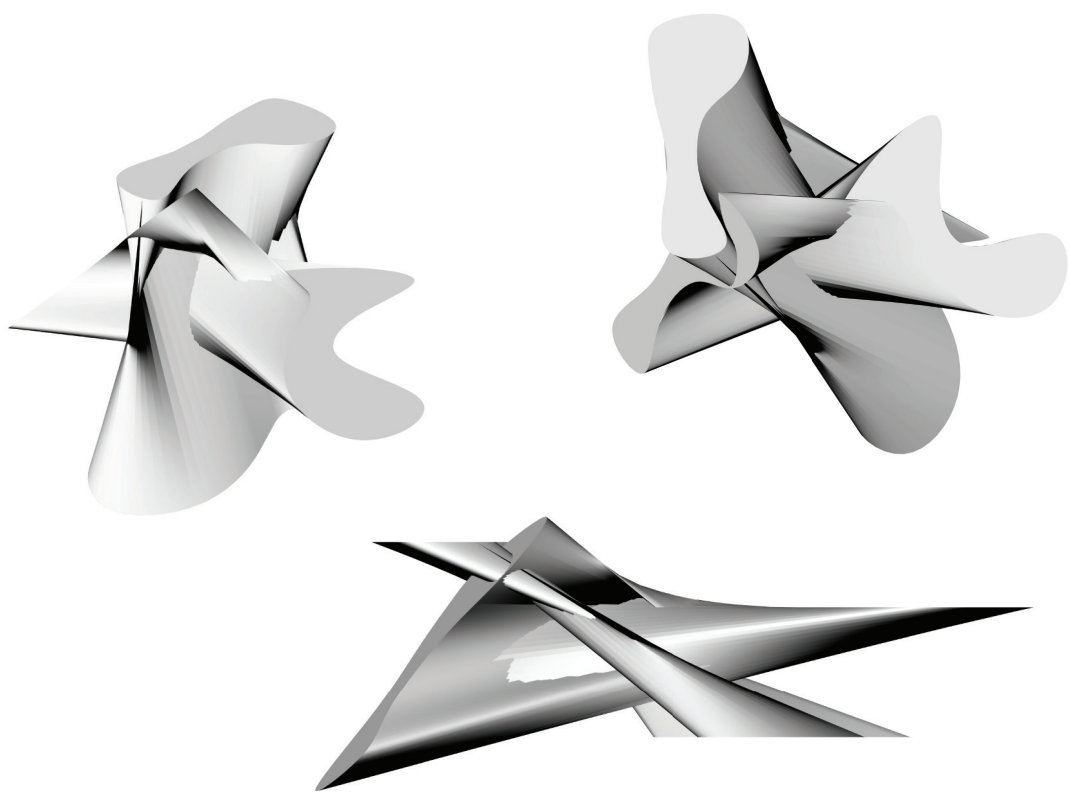




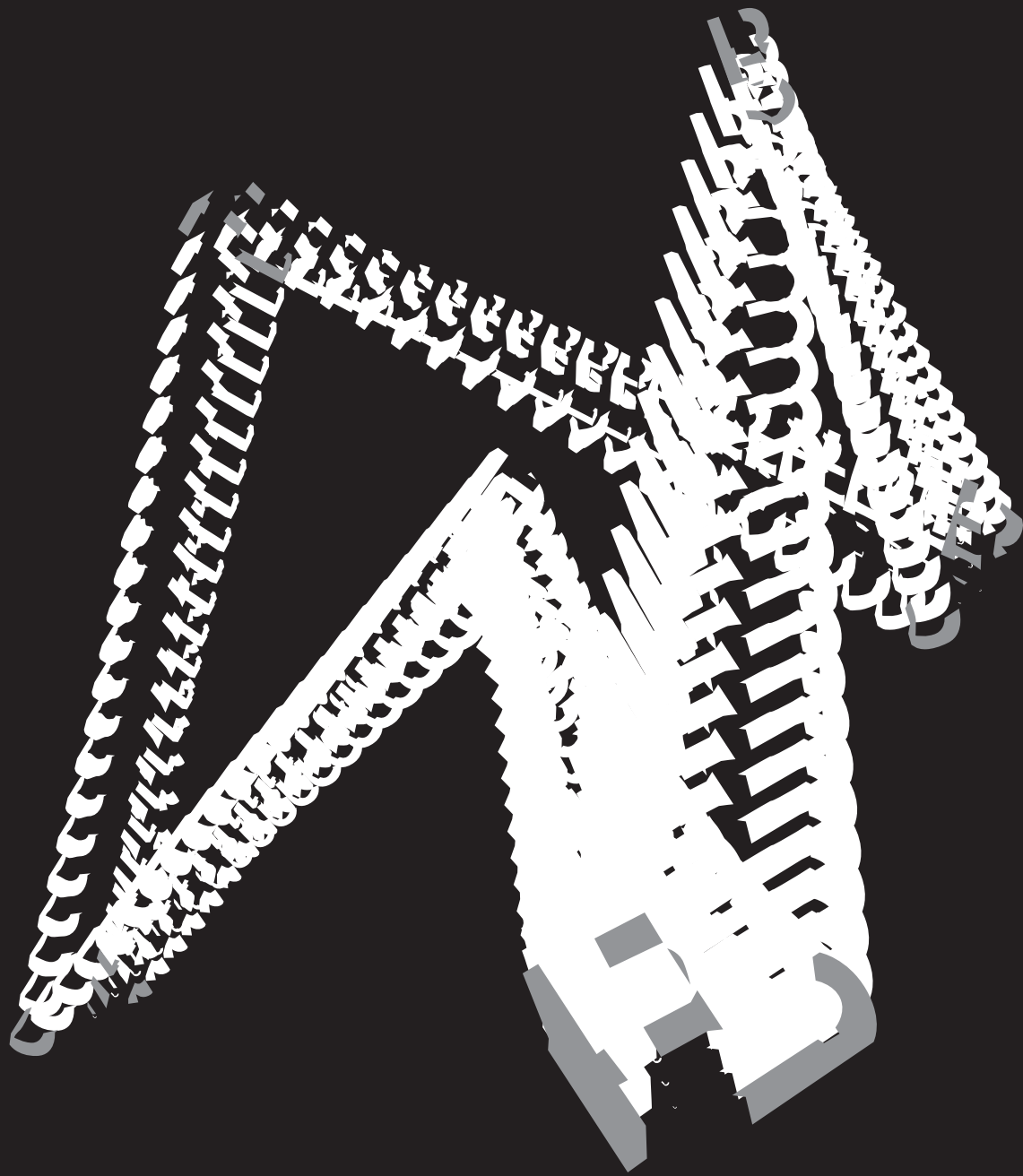
Viewpoint and perspective used as a means to generate 2D spatial studies

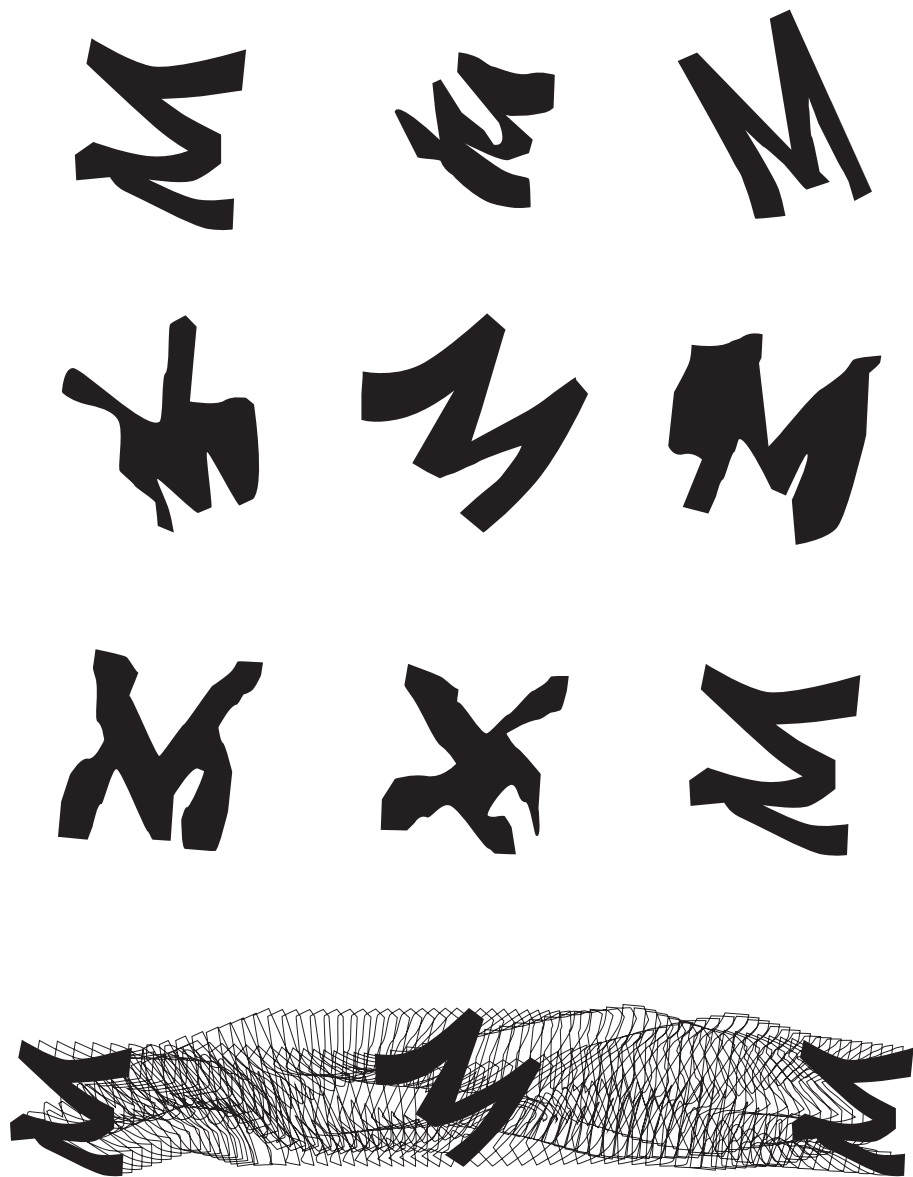


3D middle case generated utilizing the same methodologies employed to generate 2D middle case



Utilizing perspective as a means to generate navigable 2D form





TRANSITORY

Transitory typography can be defined as typographic form that lasts for only a limited amount of time. The form may appear briefly and then visually or physically disappear, or it may transition from a form that is typographic to something that is not. The term transitory implies impermanence — that the object in transit will not remain in its existing state — a fundamental quality of temporal typography. The transitory occurrence of temporal type provides a multitude of possibilities for letterforms that can work towards or away from meaning as the form progresses from one state to the next. Within different moments of time, the link between the form and its original message may be broken, resulting in the loss of meaning or understanding. The motion of the form is not the significant portion of this equation, it is the moment of transformation from one state to the next.

Transitory forms may have two or more poles at which the letterform can be most easily identified as a particular letterform or object, however there are in-between states that cannot be as simply classified. Thus, it could be concluded that the medial state of temporal typography is a direct result of transitory form. As temporal, transitory letterforms morph from instance to the next, the captured static, state of the transitory form has the potential to result in a medial form.

Emergence

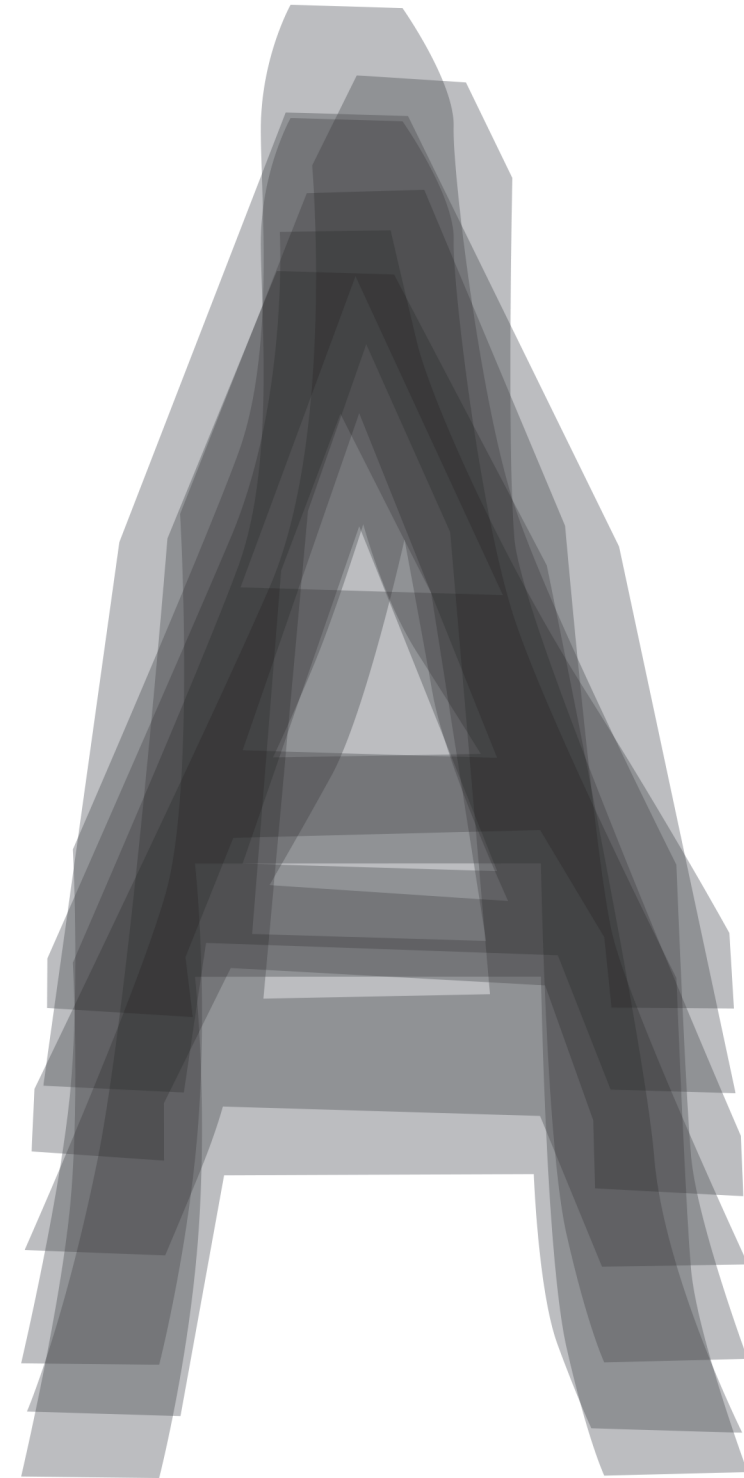
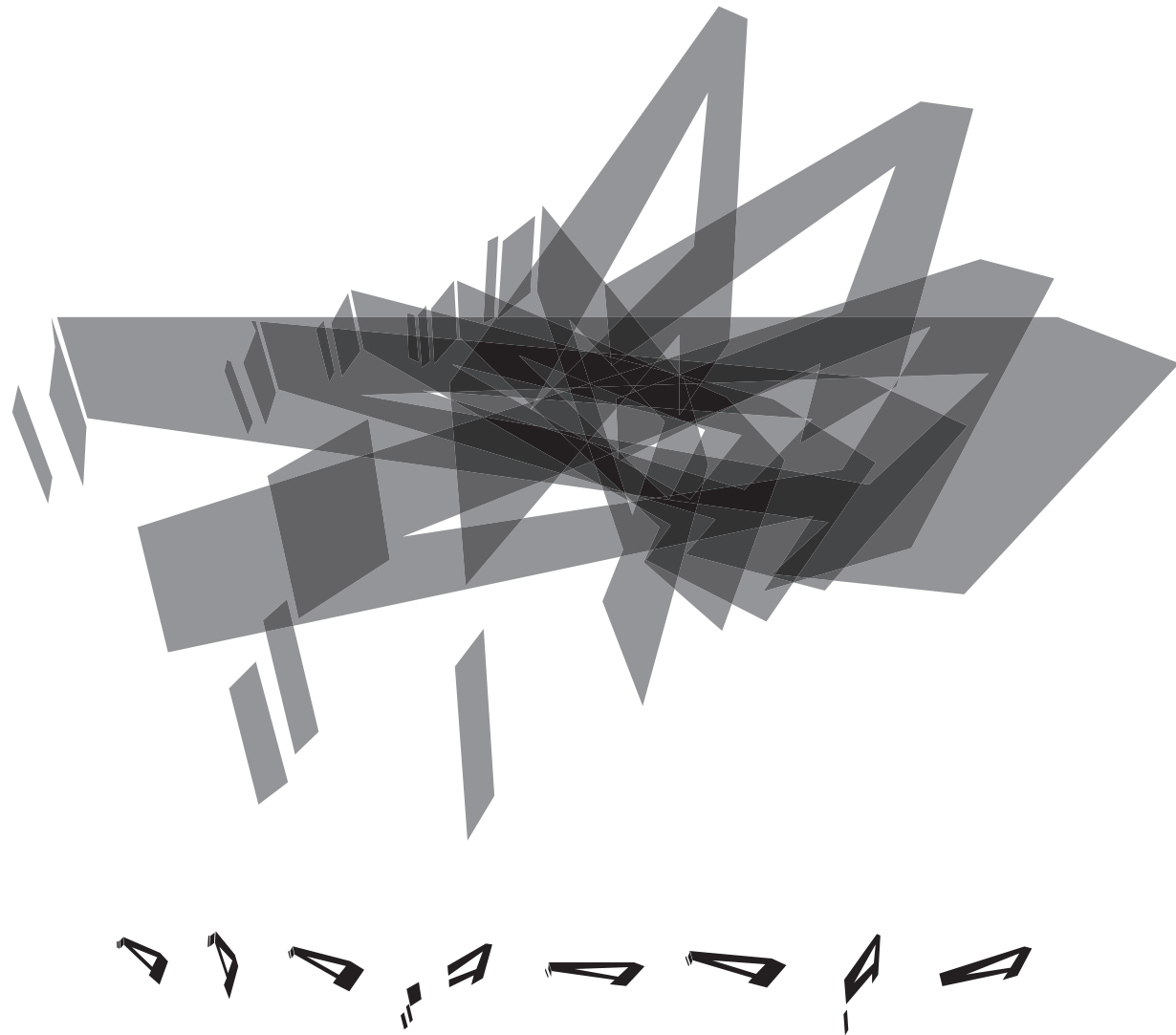
“Complexity is both a marginal and an emergent phenomenon. Never fixed or secure, the mobile site of the complexity is always momentary and the marginal moment of emergence is inevitably complex.”

—Mark Taylor, *The Moment of Complexity* (p. 23)

Entropy

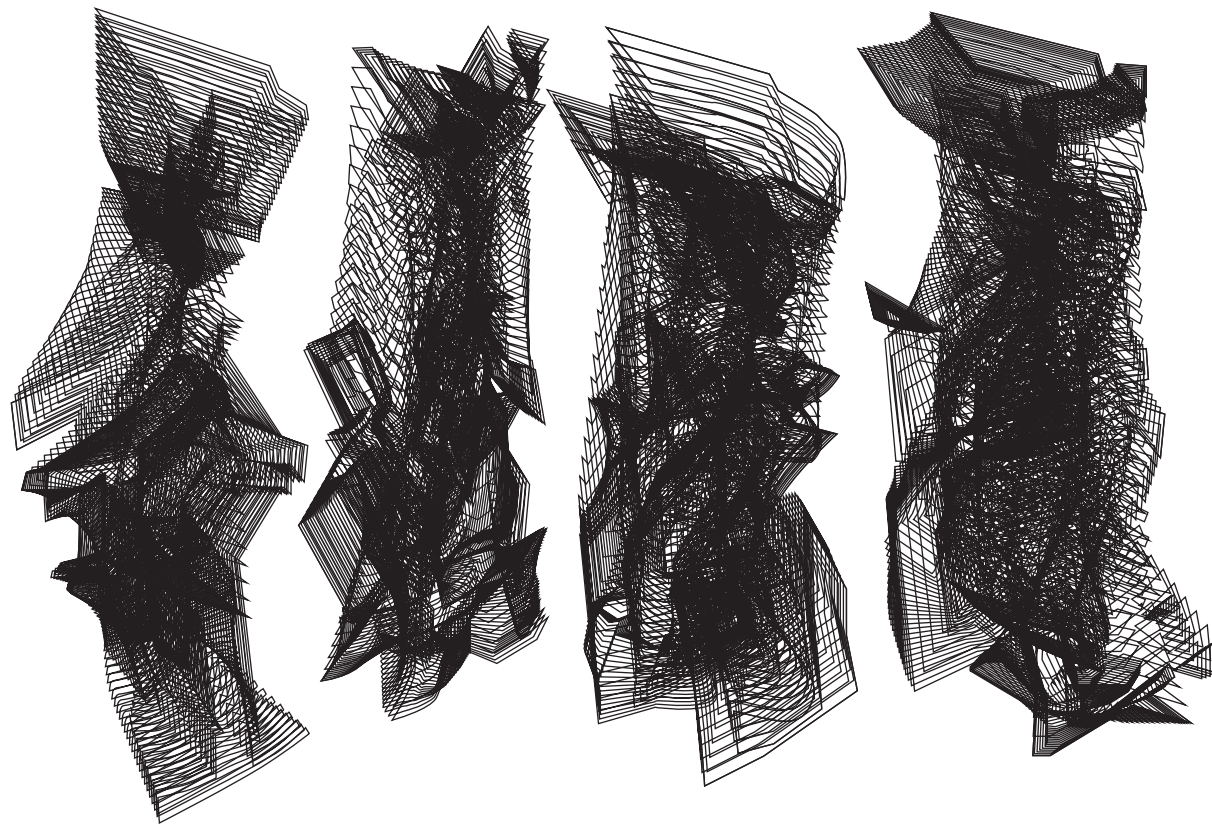
“The trajectory of [entropy] is from more to less difference. If information is a difference that makes a difference and noise is a condition in which differences become indifferent, then the arrow of time moves from information to noise.”

— Mark Taylor, *The Moment of Complexity* (p. 114)



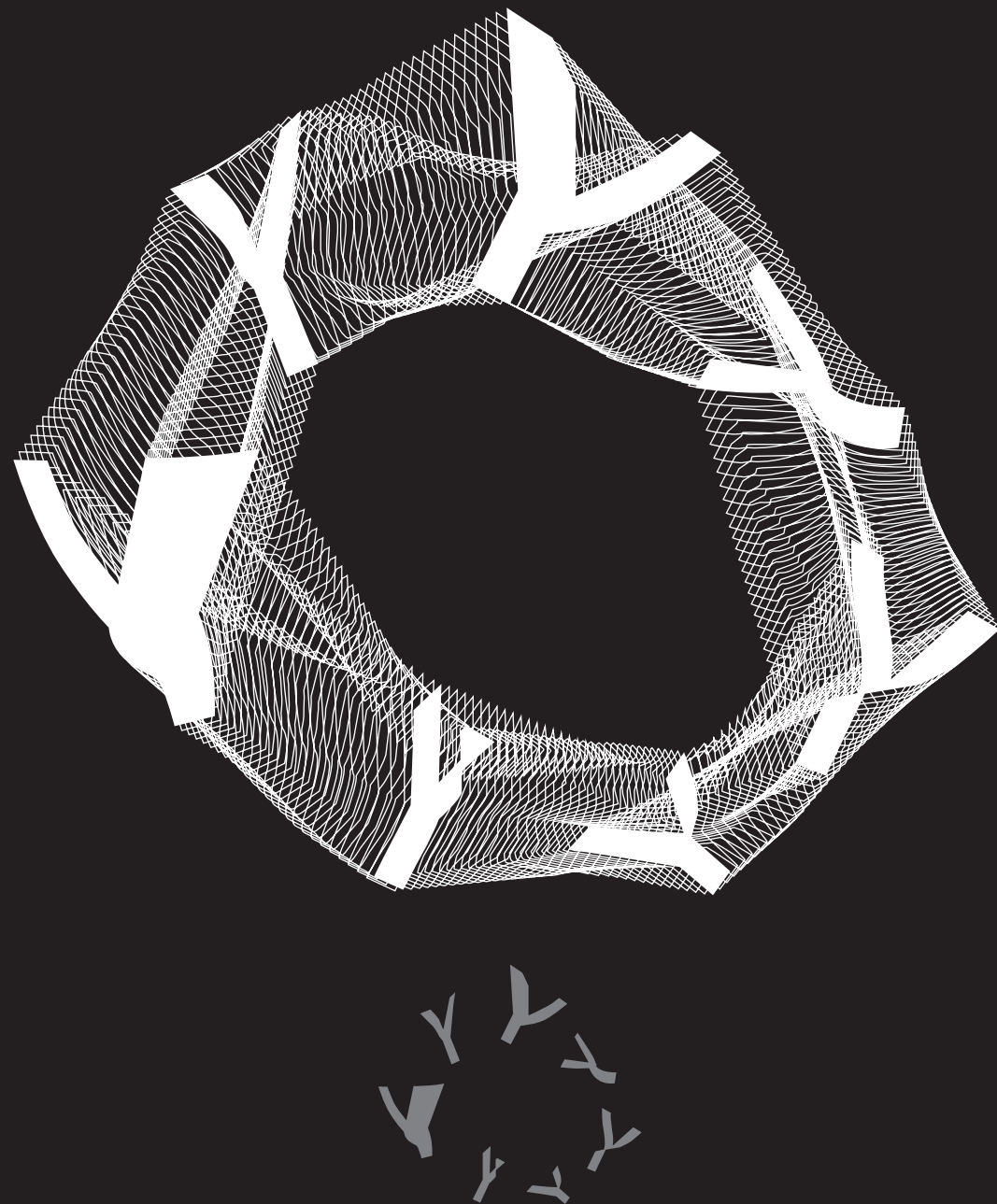


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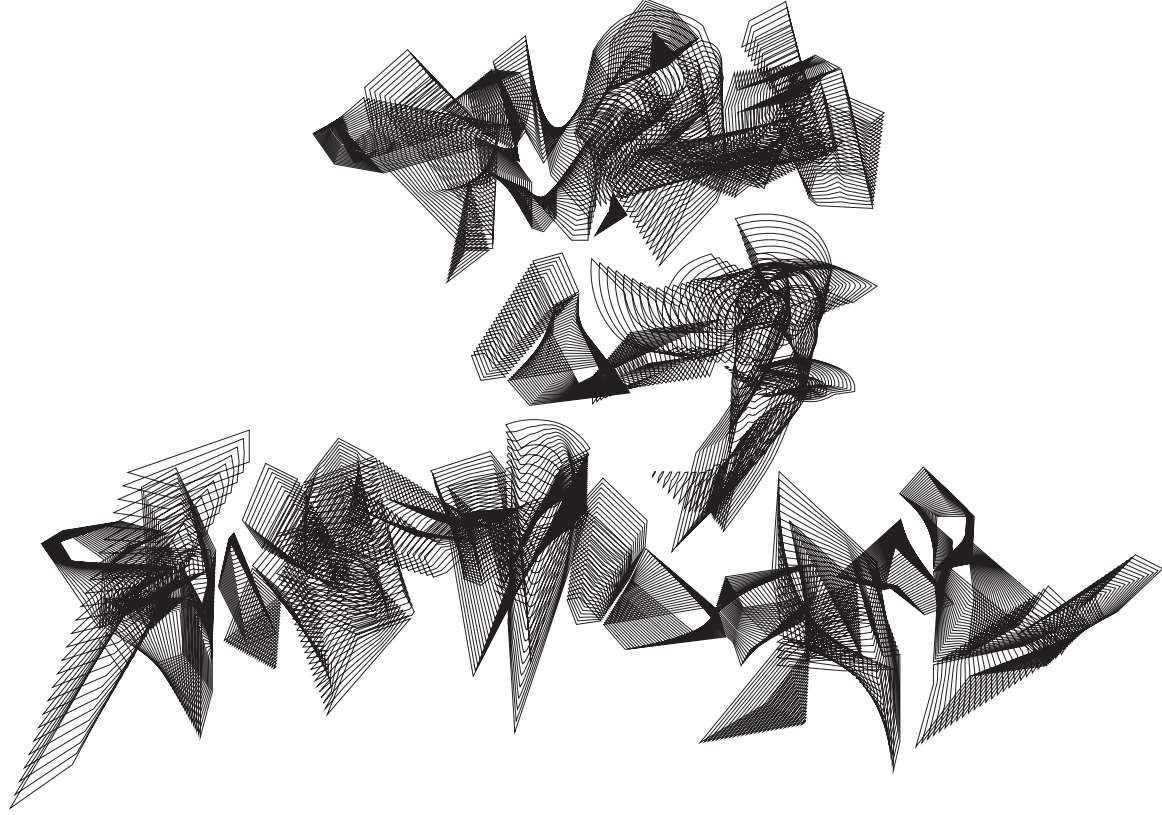
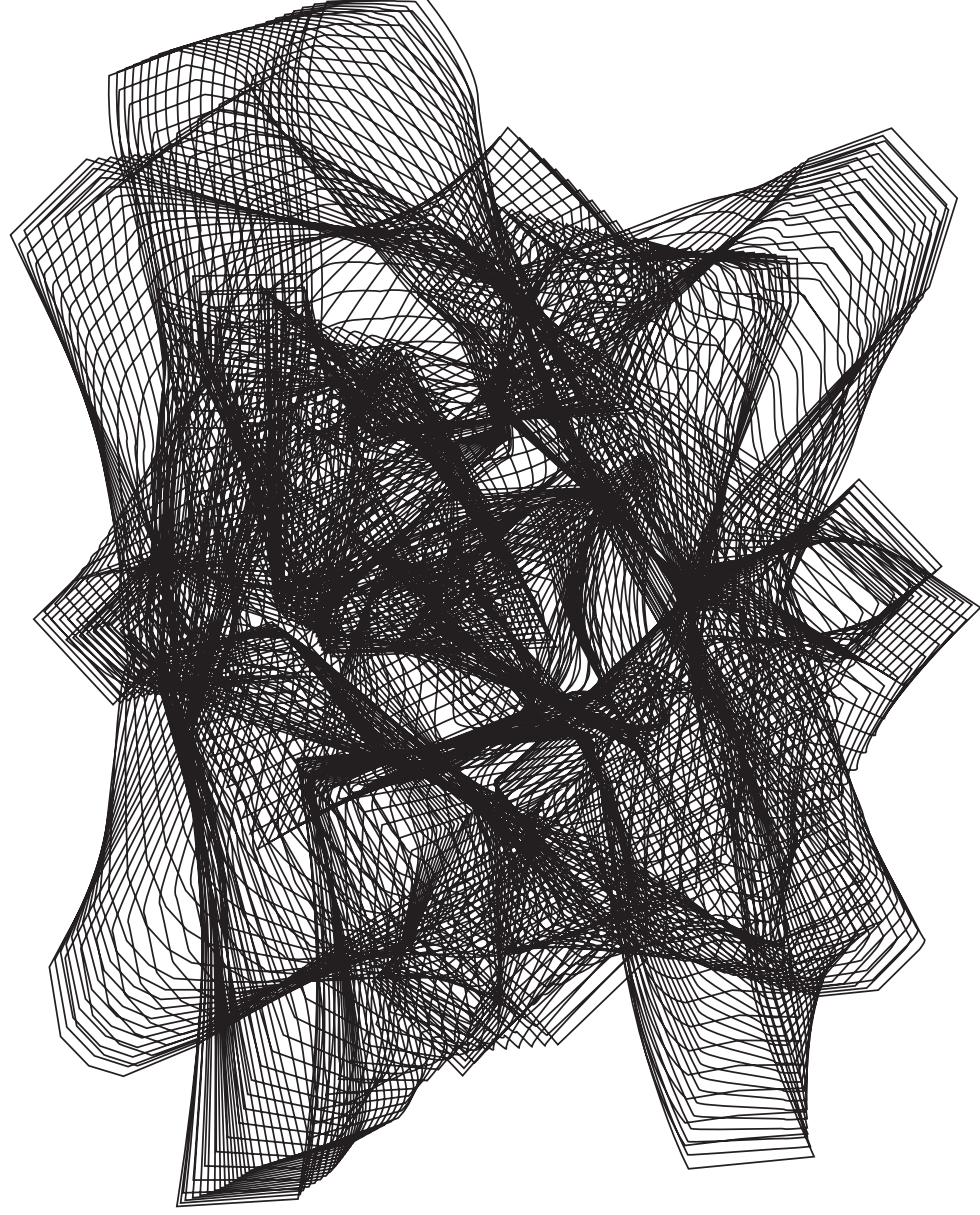
TRAJECTORIES

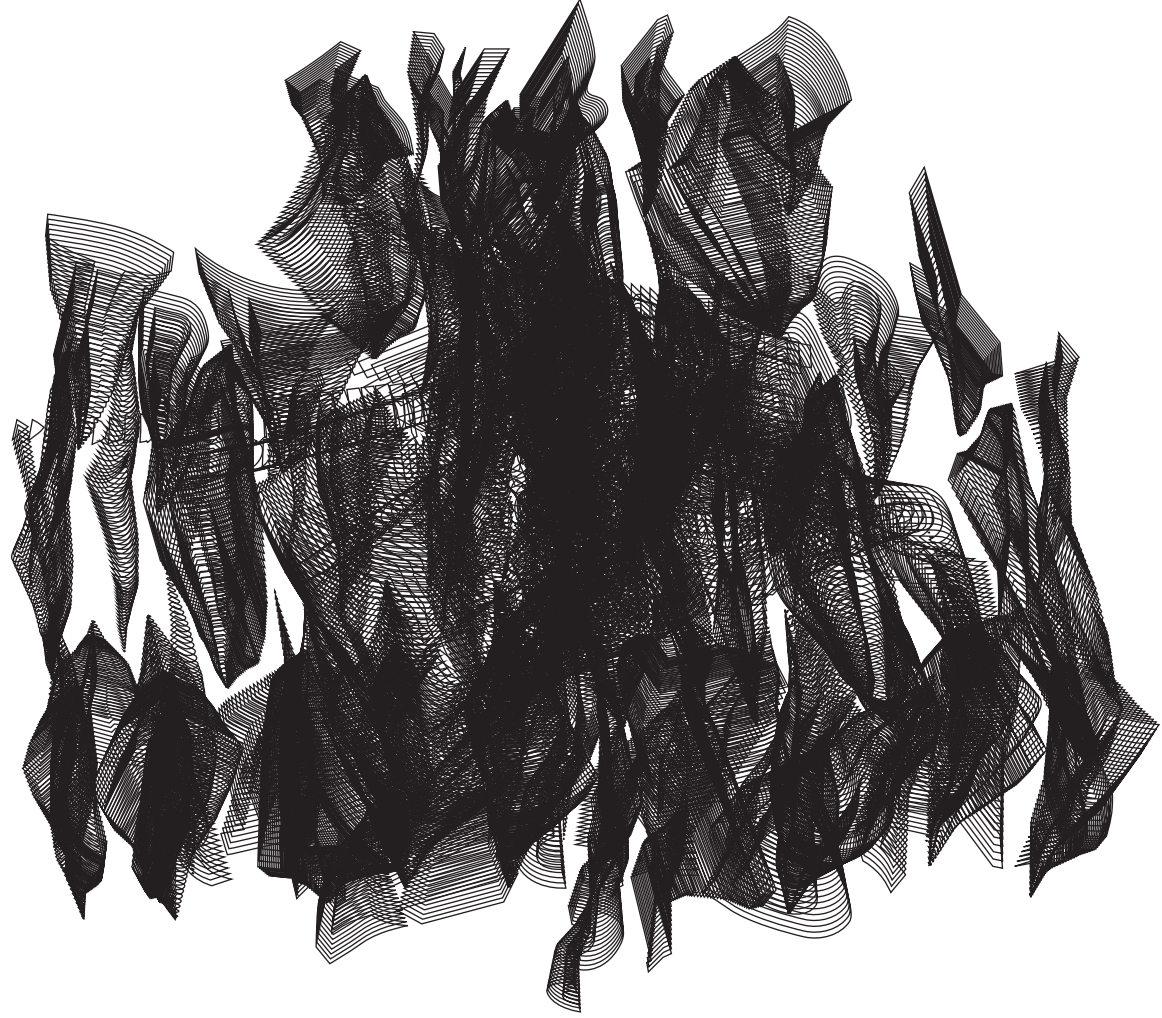


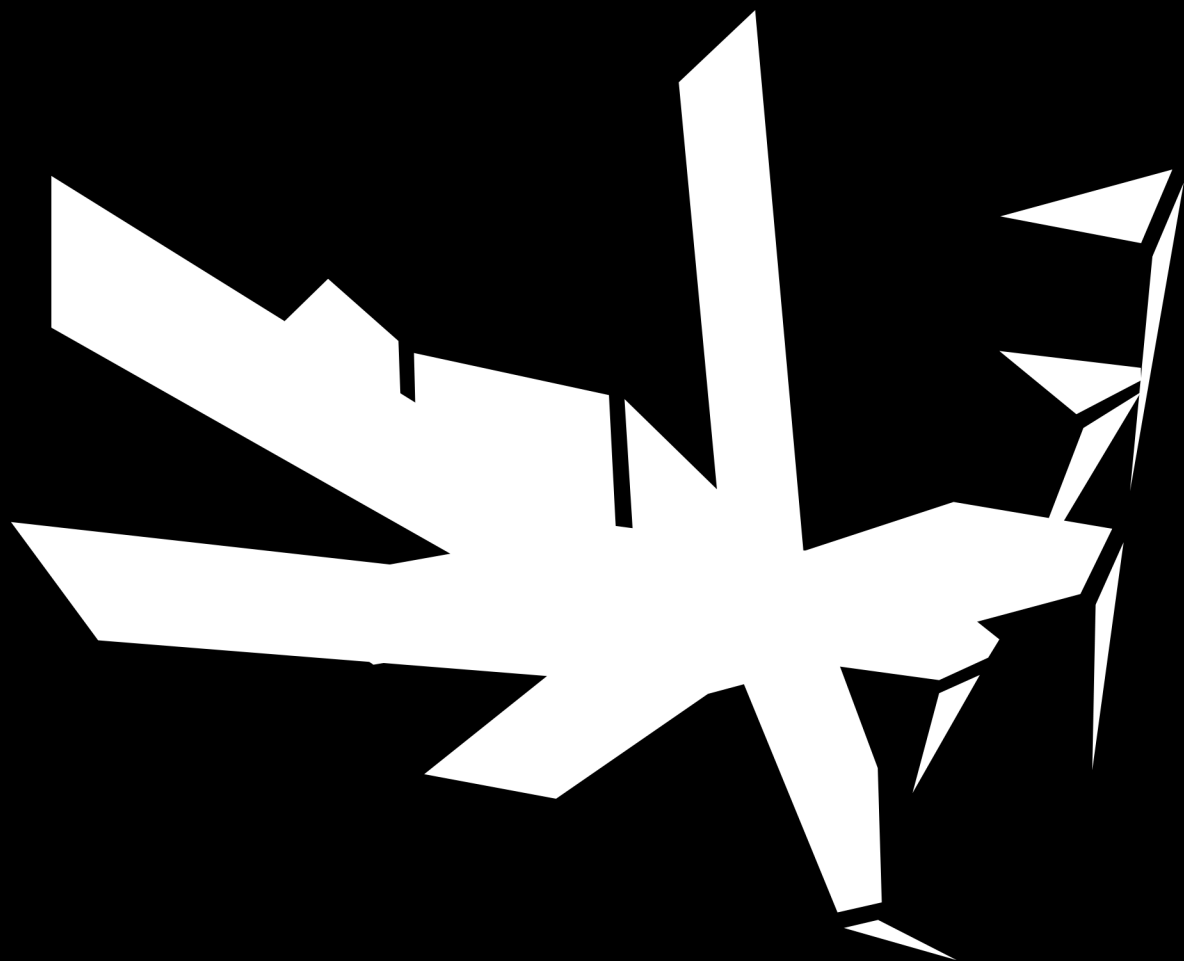
A STEP FORWARD

In order to push my research forward, I sought to merge the studies and explorations within these three individual categories. While many of the studies I had previously developed revealed that it was a fairly simple task to combine the qualities of transitory temporal type with temporal letterforms that were medial, it proved to be more difficult to create hybrids of navigable-transitory and medial-navigable forms.

Moving back and forth in parallel between analog and digital methodologies and techniques has been a central part of my process throughout this research, so once again I turned to this approach in order to move my research forward. Seeking to resolve the incongruity between the digital and physical work I had created thus far, I developed studies that would allow me to bring them together. I looked at the techniques of generative design and sought to further develop and process and methodology that would allow the algorithm of software to generate a majority of the work, but also permitted me to have a hand in the generation process.







EXTRAPOLATIONS + HABITATIONS

The studies presented in this book have generated a process and methodologies that allowed me to develop a significant formal language that I've used to explore temporal typography. This short period of research has not only brought to my attention an entire realm of typographic possibilities, it has allowed me to further the examination of, and investigation into a field that others have already begun to explore. My studies have not only created a reservoir of formal language that can be applied to additional studies in temporal letterforms, that will serve as a visual expression that can transcend a multitude of design permutations.

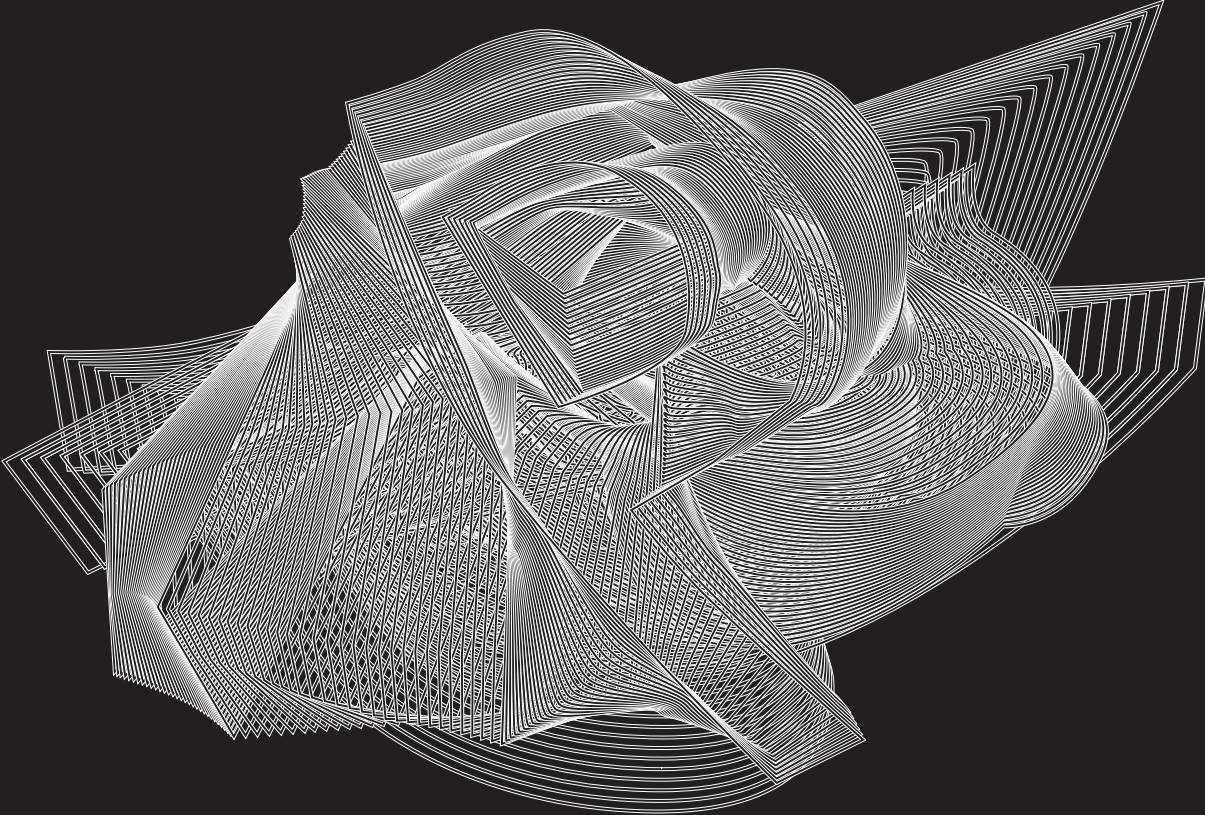
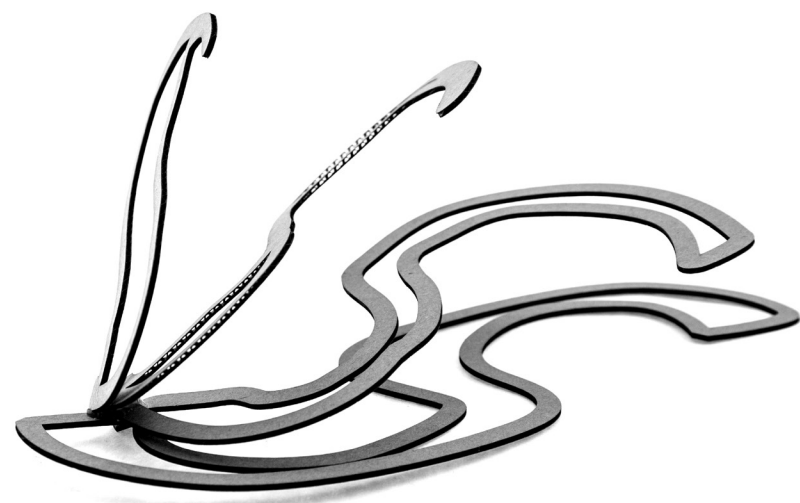
Over the course of this examination, it has become apparent that temporal typography might not be confined to a design research or academic setting — although until there is an acceptance that letterforms have a meaningful opportunity to live outside of the pre-existing principles and conventions this may be difficult. There are a variety of institutions where this work can thrive, the most obvious being design research, but it should be free to live within the world of art, as well as the social and public spheres.

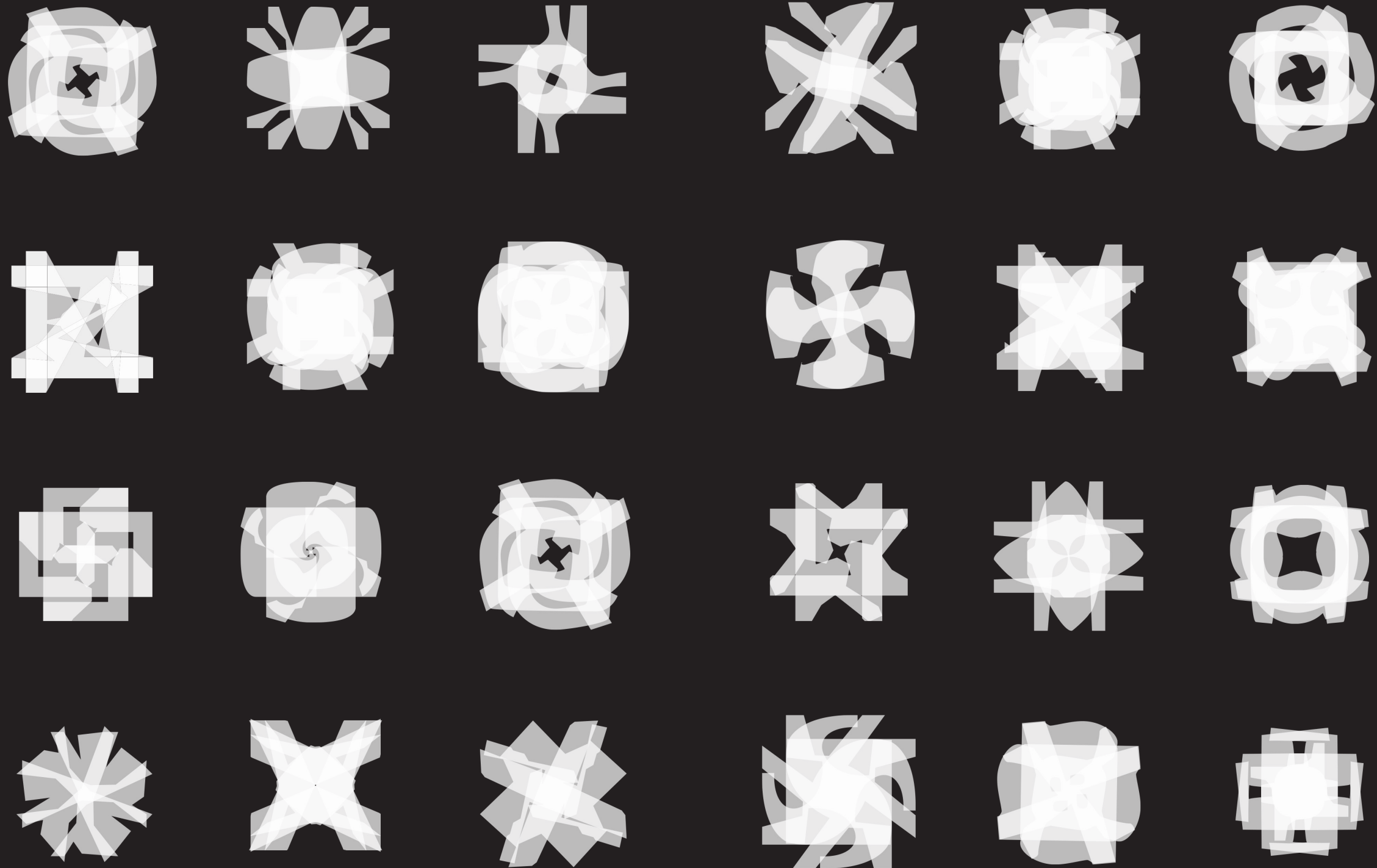
In the academic setting, the research and visual studies that I have contributed during this period will hopefully serve as a means for further exploration by others who will pick up where I have left off. While this type of design does not have direct application in the field of graphic design, it serves opens up new and alternative pathways of design that deserve to be investigated. The purpose of academic research is to forward the possibilities of what can be accomplished in the world of design and serve as a breeding ground for new ideas, methods of exploration and development of the field as a whole.

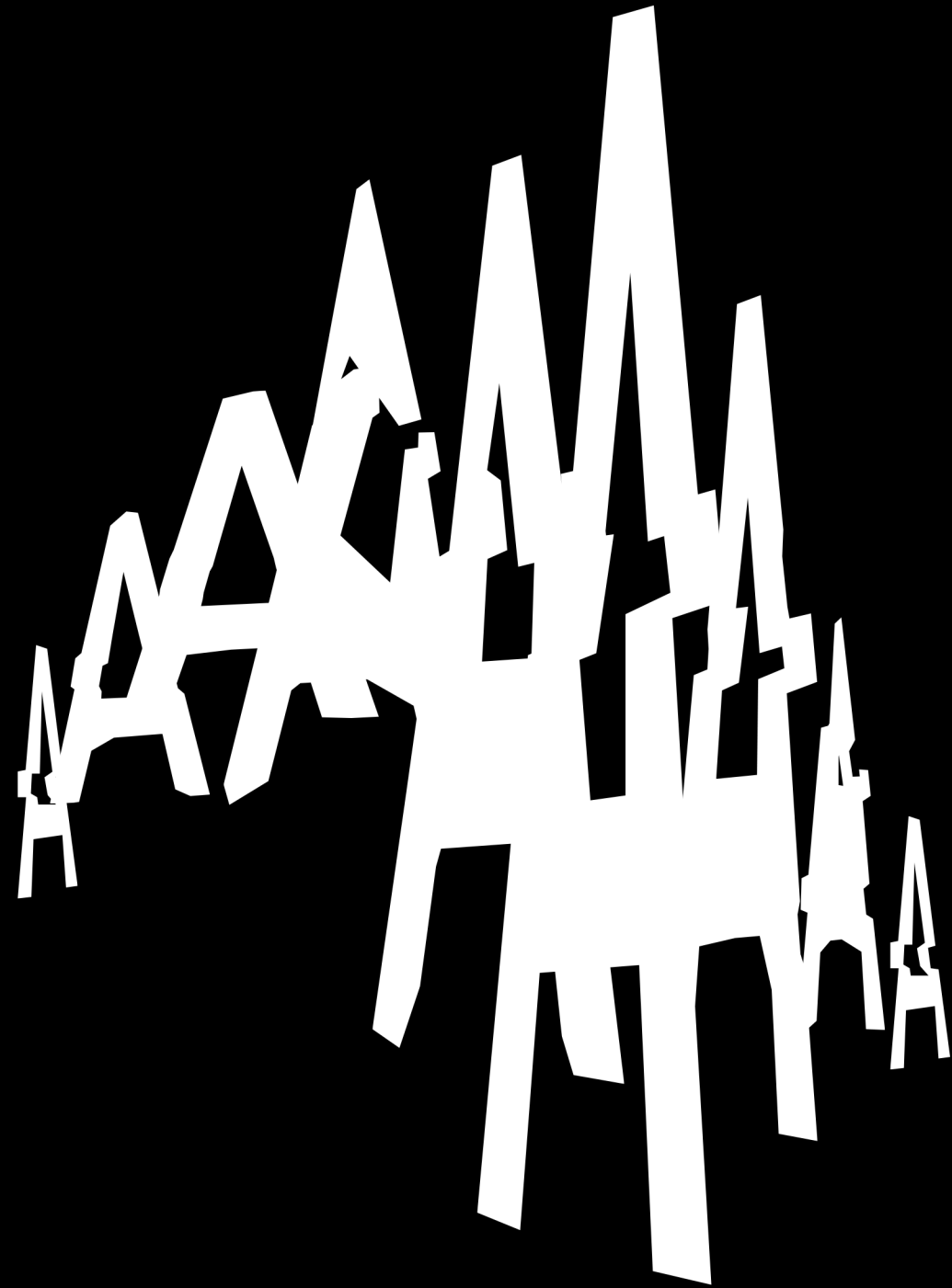
I have already stated that the formal and experiential qualities of temporal typography are re-prioritized to be above or equal to legibility and readership and the gallery setting provides a visual and immersive experience of temporal typography. In this environment it becomes a means to question our modes of communication, enticing viewers to spend time with a text in order to gather meaning that is being conveyed over a period of time. A particular message may be revealed or lose meaning and evolve into something completely different over the course of its life in the space.

As a practical application, the possibility for temporal type to live in the social and public realm requires a more formal administration. While the temporal qualities of the letterforms may not continue to live and reveal themselves in this space, the forms generated as a response to the temporal qualities of the type can be applied as visual elements to existing methods and modes of graphic design.

In my initial investigations into temporal typography, I focused on honing my process and developing strategies for creating and understanding the nature of temporal typographic forms — believing that I would come to some sort of resolution at the completion of this project. What I have realized is that these studies into a relatively small and unexplored field of typography have only served to open my eyes to the possibilities of exploration, application and research that remain an exciting territory to be explored.







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CREDITS

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