

Yale Norfolk School of Art
Norfolk, CT
May 20–June 29, 2019

Norman Pritchard, in the epigraph to his 1970 poetry collection *The Matrix*, proclaimed that “Words are ancillary to content.” If words are only one supportive part of a poem’s content, then what makes up the rest of its parts? The graphic designer might look at Pritchard’s concrete poetry and see that typeface selection, printer’s restrictions, format, and composition all say as much as the letters, words, or numbers he has written. The poem’s content might then be its typography. We can extend this understanding—that a text’s form shapes its meaning—to our readings of many different kinds of text.

As the word “typography” is a combination of the Greek words “typos” (meaning “figure”) and “grapho” (meaning “writing”), this course’s title is something of a tautology. It will be our project over the following four weeks to work toward understanding the differences and similarities between the acts of “figure-writing” and “writing,” and to produce visual research on the relationship between form and content. Working with typography can simultaneously help us understand our own technical production of language, and the means by which we navigate the written world. Put another way: to study typography in the twenty-first century is to make ever-smaller the shrinking gap between writing and reading.

This course will be equal parts seminar and workshop, involving reading and discussion as well as creative writing and making. We will study in detail texts whose forms shape their meanings in the fields of art, graphic design, poetry, and fiction. When we are not reading and discussing, participants will realize a series of typographic exercises that grow in complexity as the course progresses—first working with the individual *letterform*, then the *word*, then the *sentence*. While participants will surely learn practical skills, the primary focus of this course will not be the technical understanding of design software nor a detailed survey of graphic design history, but rather the making and critique of typography through simple, tangible means such as photo-copying, collage, laser printing, and handwriting. Participants will be expected to generate their own text, as well as work with found text.

Typography and Writing is primarily an art course. Participants will have a strong and sustained interest in the written, printed, and spoken word, and will be resourceful, iterative, and inventive in the work they make. Participants must also actively contribute to discussions of readings and critiques of fellow participants’ work.

SESSION 1, MAY 21

Lecture: "On Translation"
Workshop: Google Translate exercise

Alison Knowles, James Tenney, and Siemens System 4004, *A House of Dust* (New York: Verlag Gebr. Kölnig Köln, 1967).
Laurence Sterne, *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman* (1759–67).

SESSION 2, MAY 28

Reading and discussion: "The New Art of Making Books"
Reading and discussion: *I Love New York, Crazy City*

Ulises Carrión, "The New Art of Making Books" [1980], *Artists' Books: A Critical Anthology and Sourcebook* (Layton: Gibbs Smith Publishers, 1985).
Isa Genzken, *I Love New York, Crazy City* (Zürich: JRP Ringier, 2006).

SESSION 3, JUNE 4

Listening and discussion: "Sound Poems and Graphic Notation"

Charles Amirkhanian, "Dutiful Ducks," *Lexical Music* (Arch Records, 1979).

Caroline Bergvall, "Ambient Fish," *Rockdrill 8* (2005).

Caroline Bergvall, "Fuses (After Carolee Schneemann)," *Contemporary Experimental Women's Poetry Festival, Cambridge University* (2006).

M. NourbeSe Philip, *Zong!* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2008).

Norman Pritchard, *The Matrix* (Garden City: Doubleday & Company, 1970).

Kurt Schwitters, "RIBBLE BOBBLE PIMLICO," *Ursonate* (c. 1932).

SESSION 4, JUNE 11

Lecture and discussion: "On Object Labels"

Joseph Grigely, *Exhibition Prosthetics* (London: Bedford Press, 2010).

Martin Herbert on Trisha Donnelly and Cady Noland, *Tell Them I Said No* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2016).

Edward Johnston, "On the Labelling of Exhibits" [1933], *F.R. David: "Spin Cycle"* (Amsterdam: de Appel Arts Centre, 2011).

Jenny Schlenzka on Adam Pendleton, *Black Dada: what can black dada do for me do for me black dada, a reader* (London: Koenig Books Ltd, 2017).