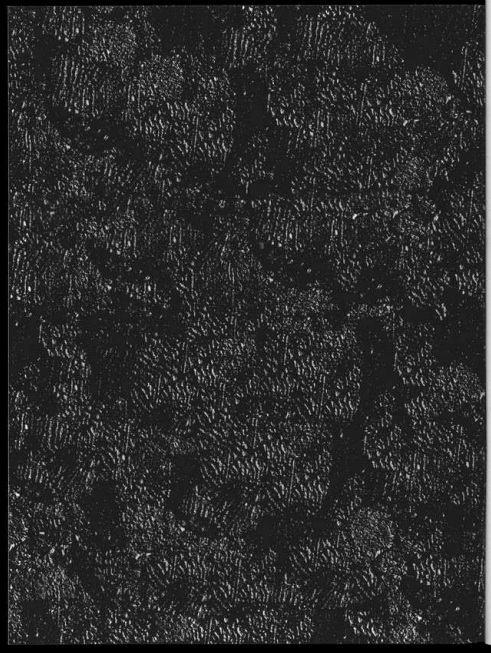
This selection of projects has been prepared specifically for the Typographer-in-Residence 2027 call. In my project proposal I have focussed on one prospective strand of work that I think resonates with your call. I organised this document to demonstrate the many affinities between my activities and the centre's outlook and to express that I have much relevant experience which I would be thrilled to contribute to the discourse around the centre's programme.

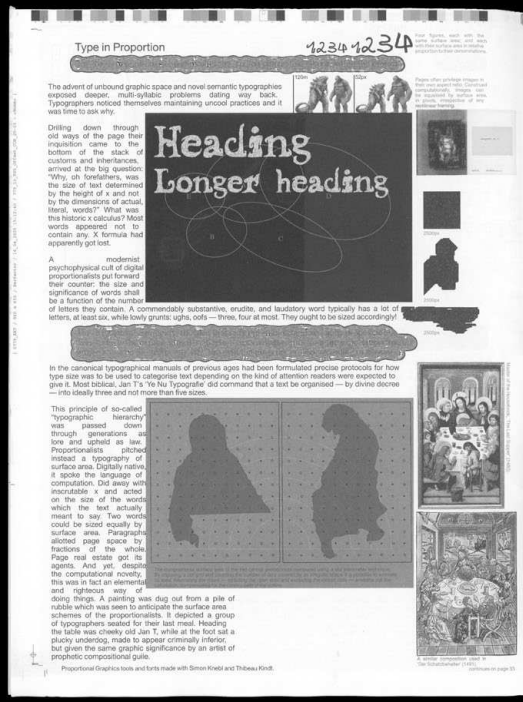


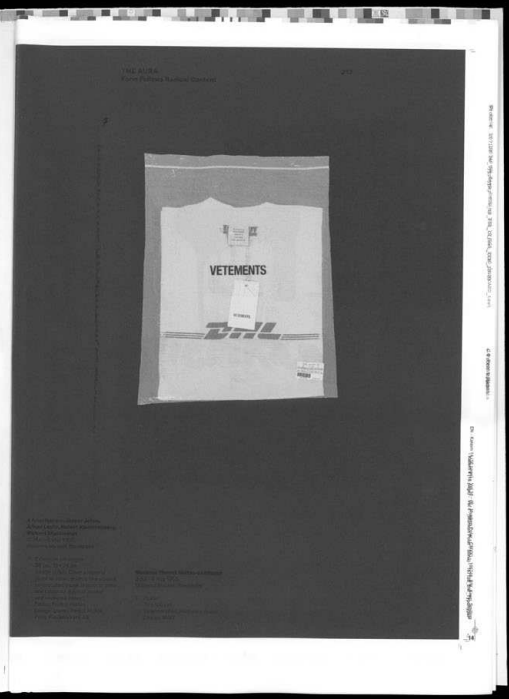
In 2025 I self-published the book *typohypergraphicobject*, a teachable agenda for conscious graphic design, printed and overprinted in multiple offset and silkscreen inks on make-ready sheets and leftovers from four other books.

It includes an essay of mine revisiting historical forces which have pressurised typographic space, such as the early twentieth century efforts to miniaturise books in order to deal with overcrowding in libraries, Herbert Spencer's call for brevity in written communication and, of course, our contemporary crises of resources. This essay was intricately written-and-typeset into available spaces.





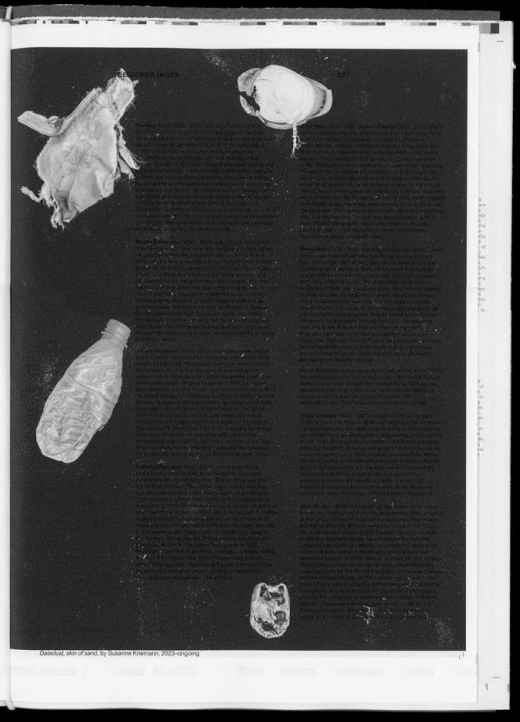




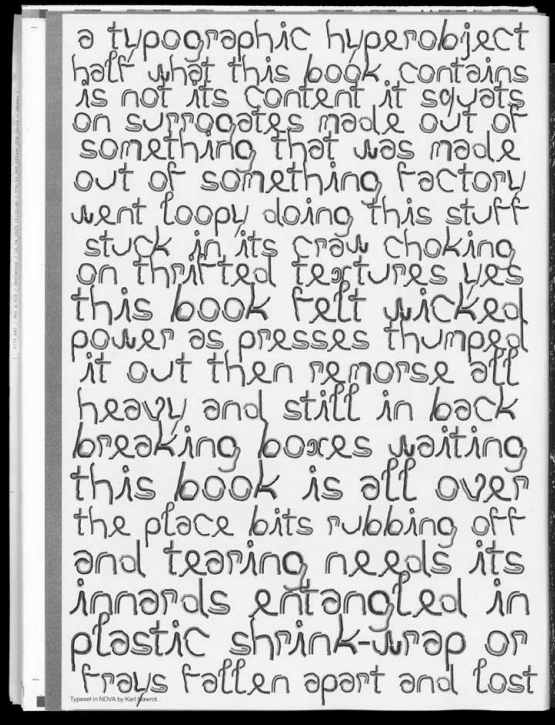


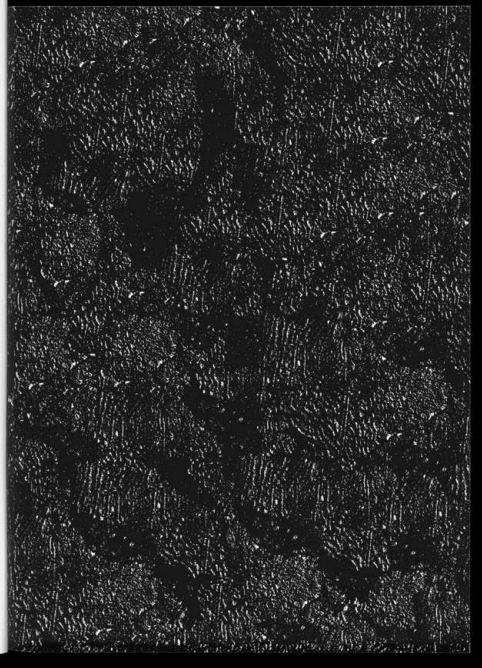
† Keep Smiling! collection of graphic objects (pp. 219 – 226). Photo: Francesca Ballmer, 2023.

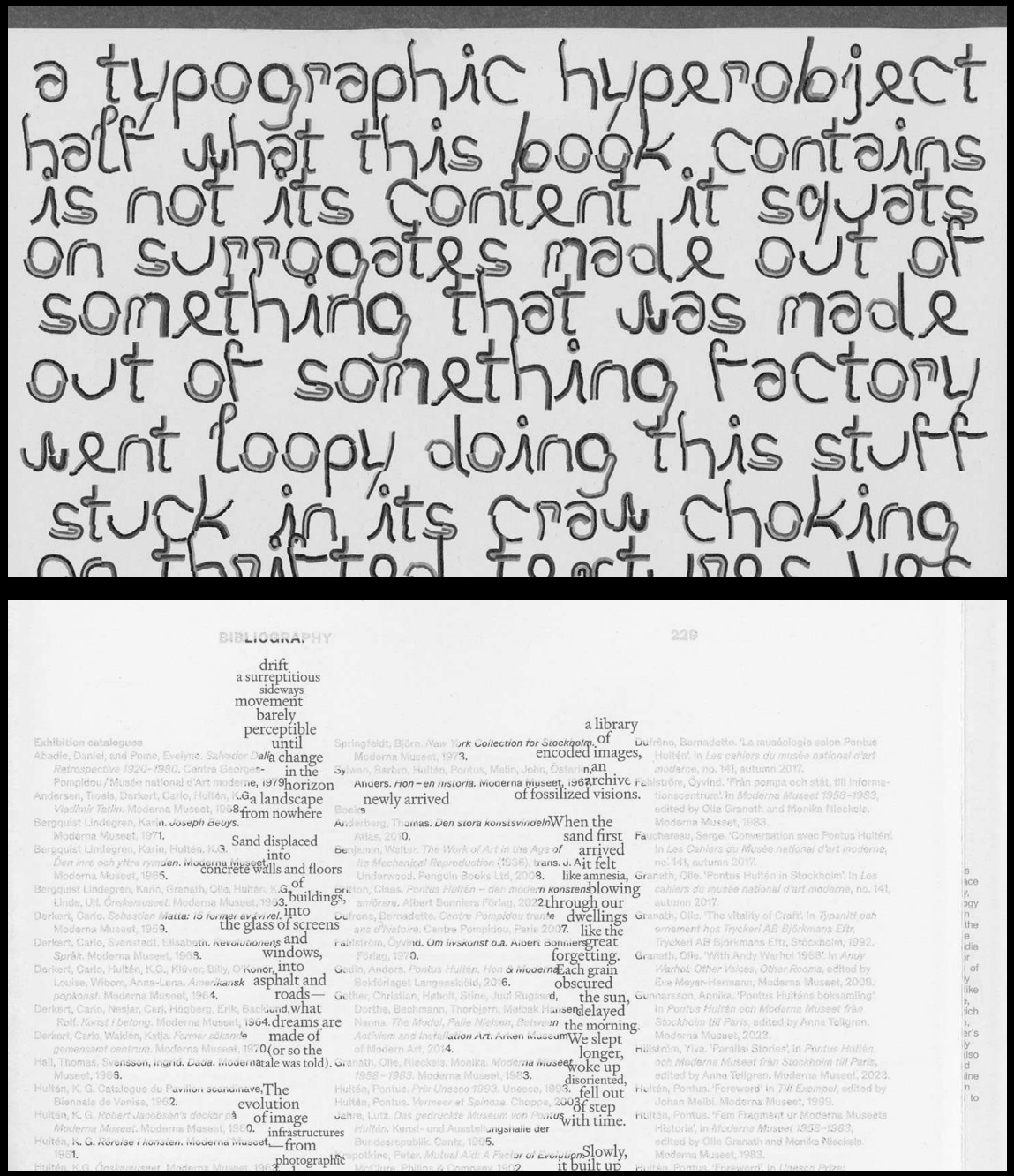
A page from Keep Smiling! The Printed Universe of Pontus Hultén, by Stina Gromark, published by OUT SIDE IN, 2025.



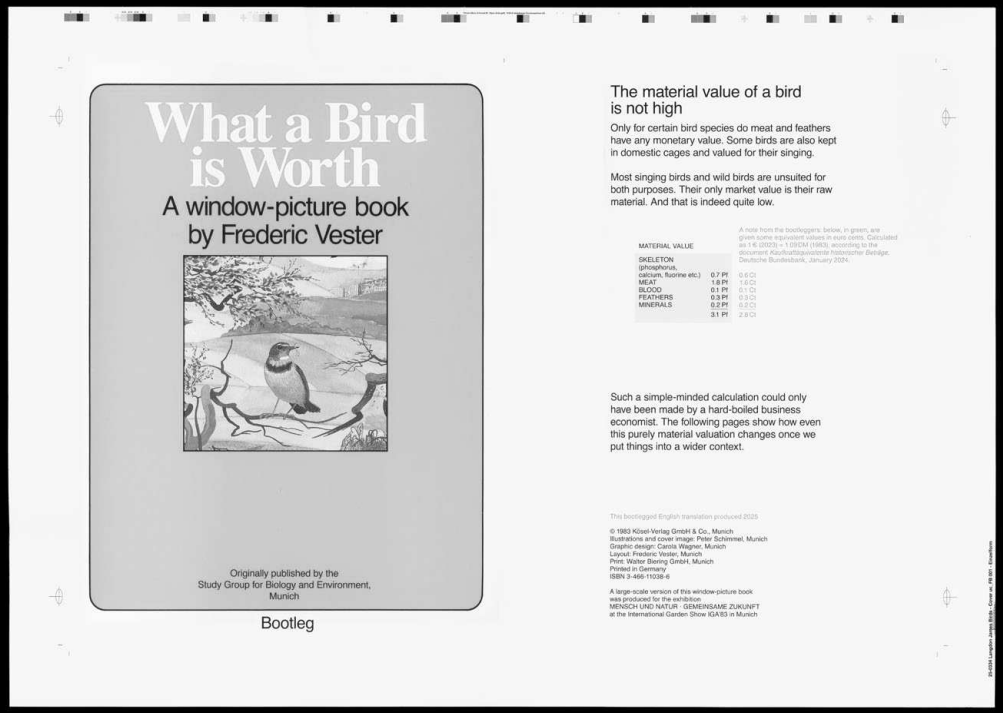
Dalecluid, skin of sand, by Susanne Kriemann, 2023–ongoing.

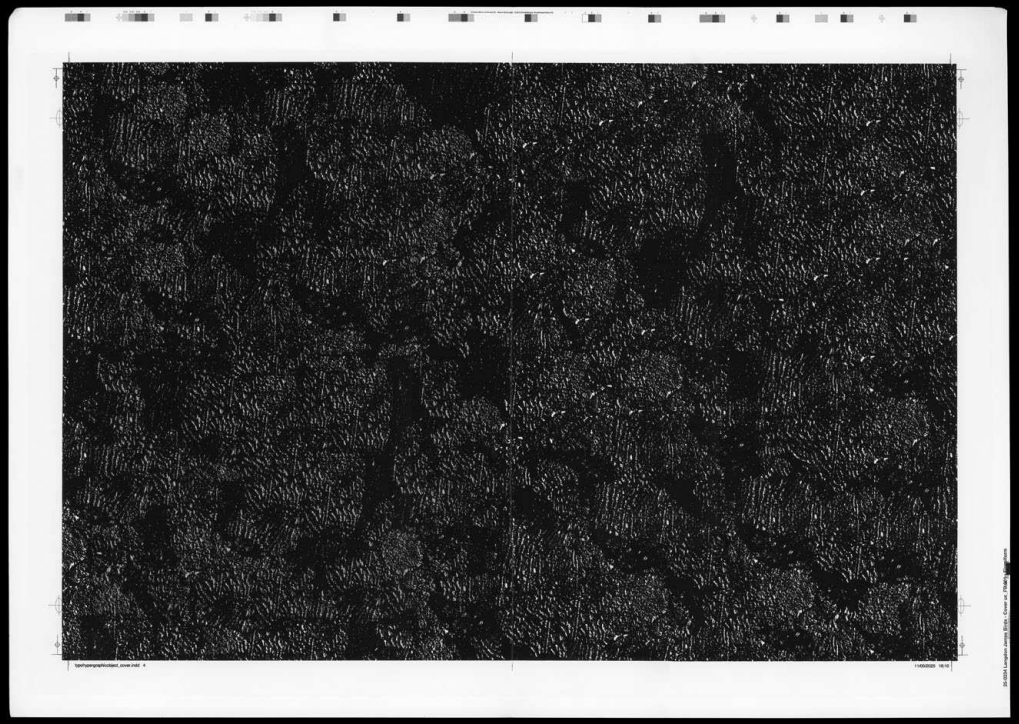






Top: custom typeface developed with artst Karl Nawrot.
Bottom: text typeset and overprinted into inter-columnal space from a previous printing.

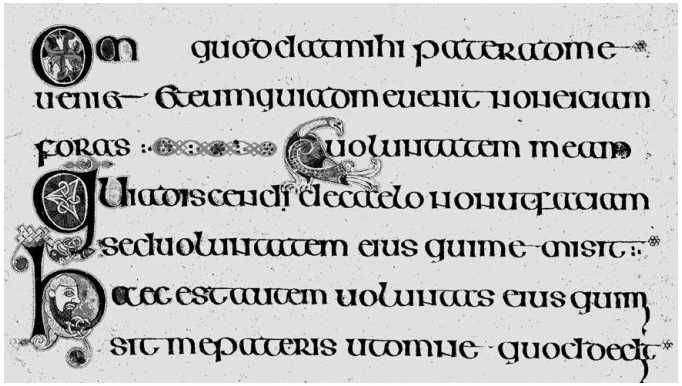


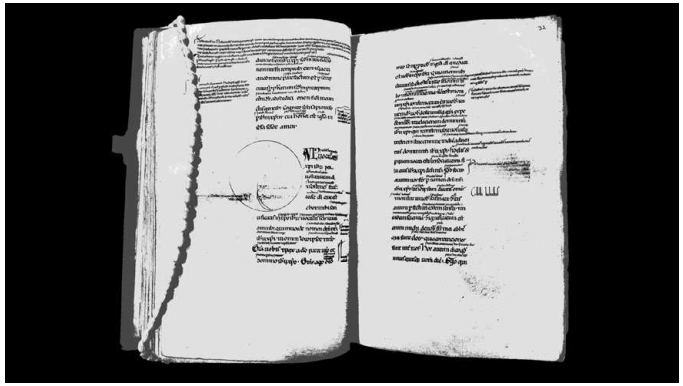


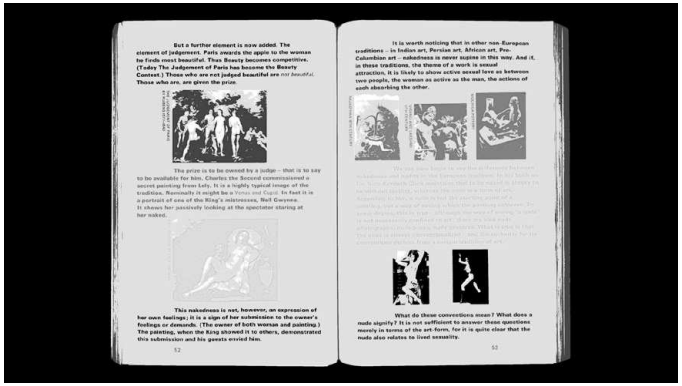
Left: the cover of *typohypergraphicobject* was overprinted onto extra sheets from my bootleg English translation of *What a Bird is Worth* by German ecologist Frederic Vester.

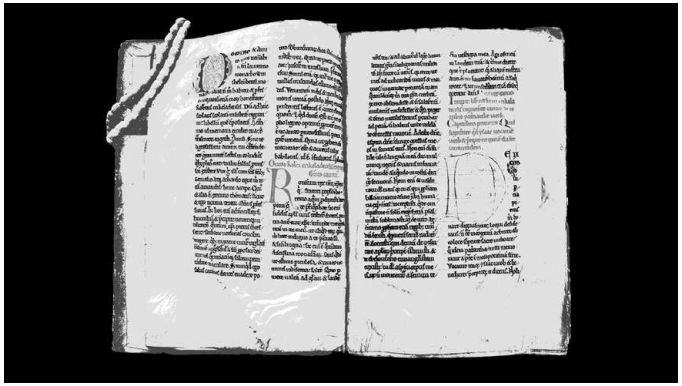


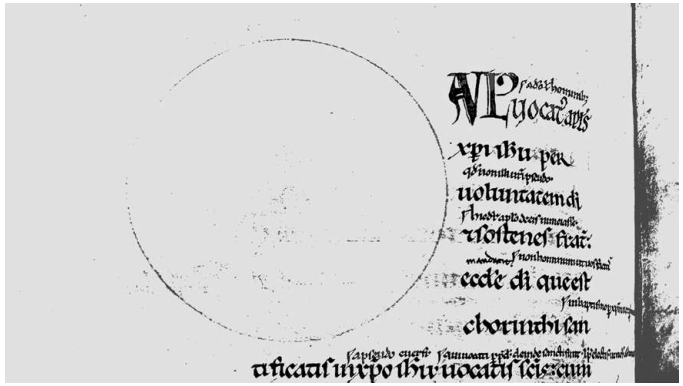
Above: a photograph showing all of the materials to be overprinted in the production of *typohypergraphicobject* at the print factory of Die Keure in Bruges, Belgium. White silkscreen is used to obscure a reproduction of an artwork onto which the photograph is overprinted.

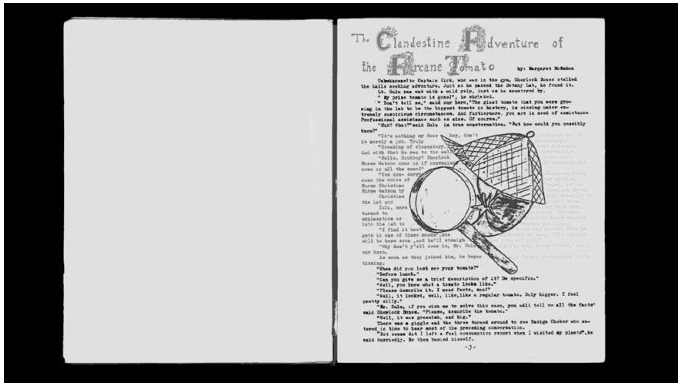






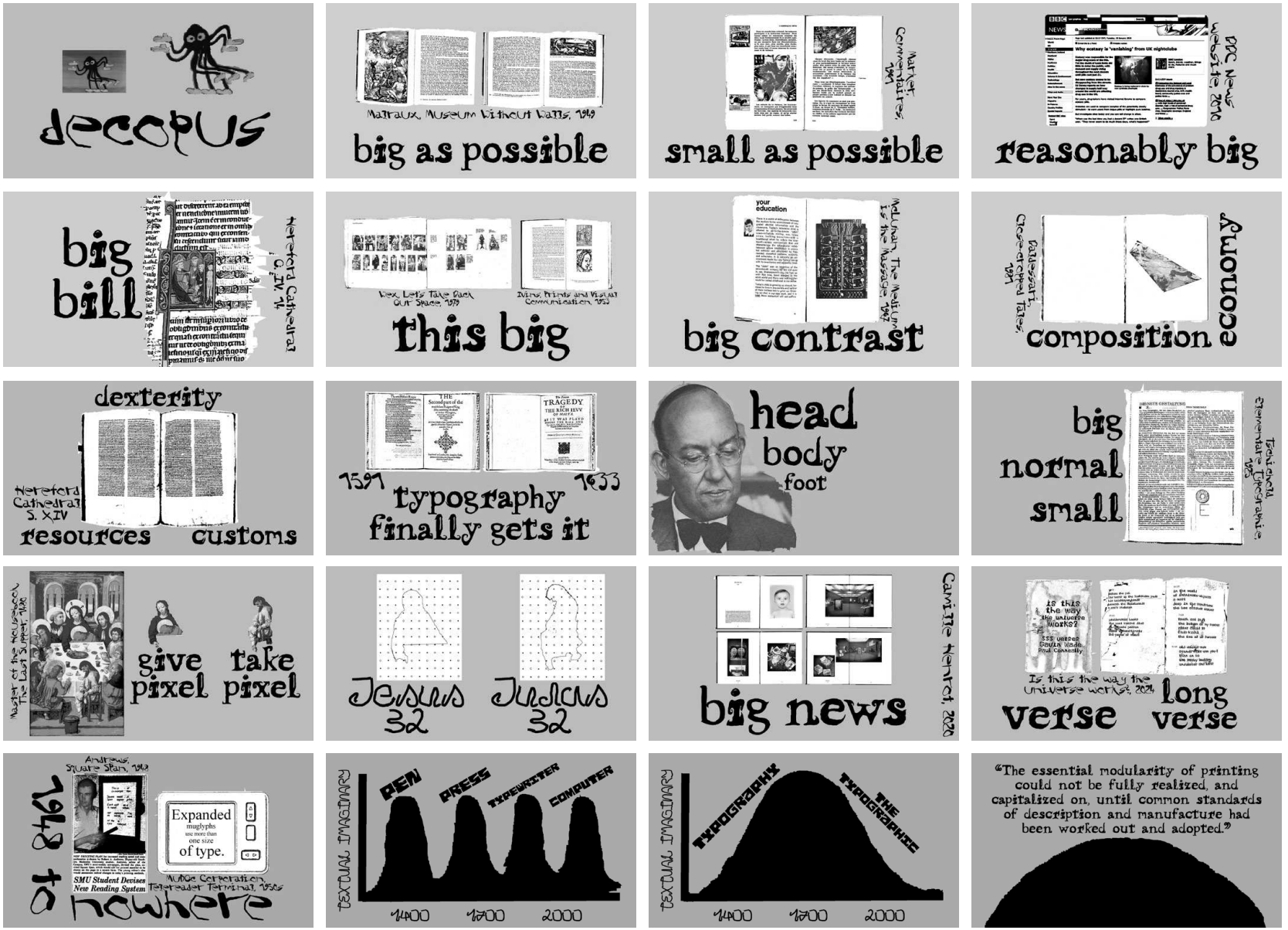






At the *Typography Theory Practice* symposium at Leeds Beckett University in 2025, I presented a paper based on primary research conducted at Hereford Cathedral Library. Looking specifically at unfinished medieval manuscripts in the collection, I explored the remnants of scribal 'hand-offs' — the points on a page where one scribe leaves space for another to work into. This research ventures a spatial theory of textual laboriousness in which the most intensive work tends to appear at specific positions on the page. I stylised the presentation using indexed colour spaces: more colours are used as graphic laboriousness increases.

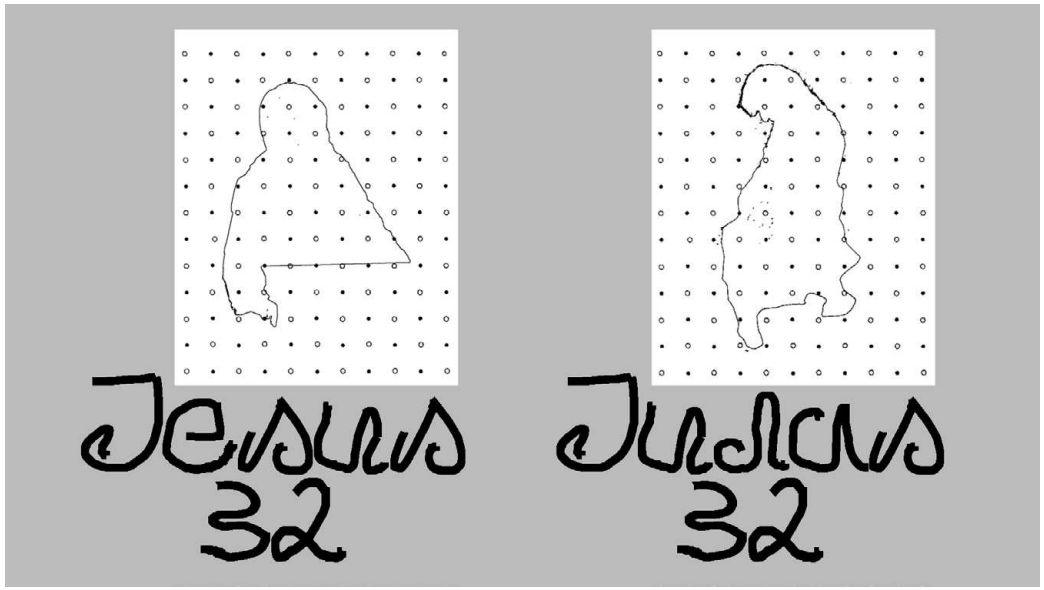
Related to this research, a line of enquiry that I am pursuing is the supposition that the distinction, in typography, between *display* and *text* is not a purely cognitive affordance, as modernism might have conditioned us to believe, but an inheritance which reproduces the relative laboriousness of different departments of the scribal division of labour.



At the *Typography Theory Practice* symposium in 2024 I presented a paper on historical logics which have determined the relative size of graphic elements on pages, lamenting the fact that digital typography so closely reproduces the hardware constraints of print. The presentation was designed entirely with a set of digital tools, made for the purpose, which allowed the precise control of each element — text, image, graphic — by its surface area in pixels on the slide.



Here is an inspiration – a painting of the last supper in the Gemäldegalerie in Berlin. The compositional problem-solving in this painting is premodern, but seems to follow a certain logic. The main character, Jesus, occupies the prominent position at the head of the table and the upper centre of the painting. The composition makes the disciples appear small compared to their idol, *and* it creates an equality of pictorial space.

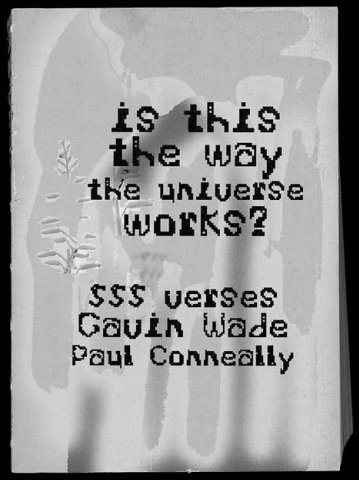


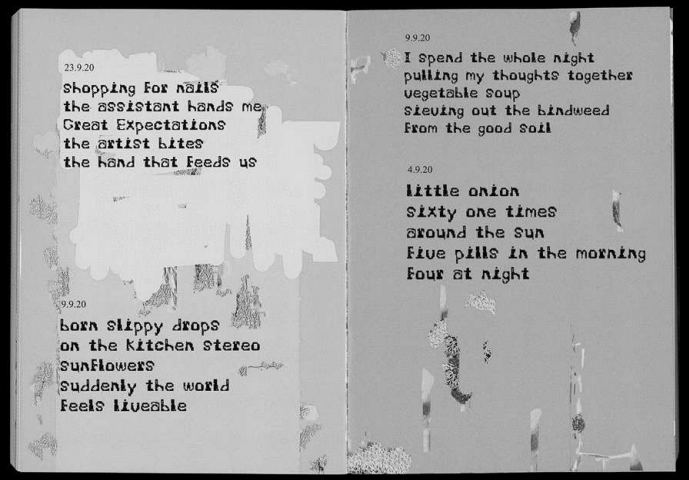
These are dot planimeters. This is a technique used in forestry to calculate irregularly shaped areas on a map. By imposing a dot grid and counting the number of dots covered by a shape it is possible to estimate its area. Alternating the count — including the open dots and excluding the closed dots — smooths out the calculation, compensating for the curving path of the outline. By this method, Jesus and Judas do indeed occupy the same area in the painting.

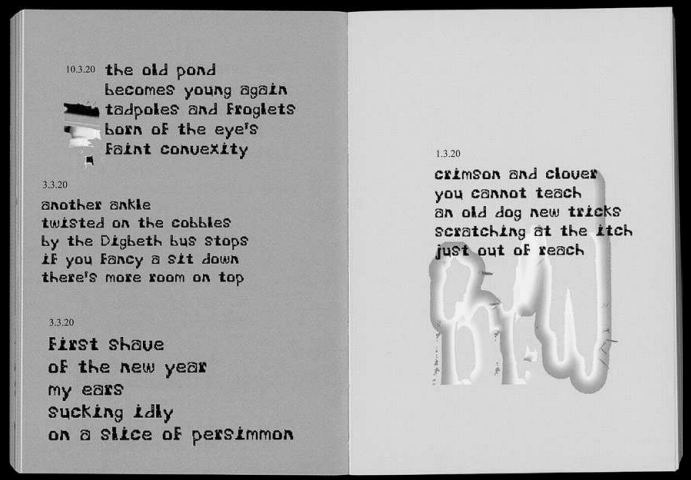
Script from the 2024 *Typography Theory Practice* presentation. In this presentation type size is determined not by point size but surface area.

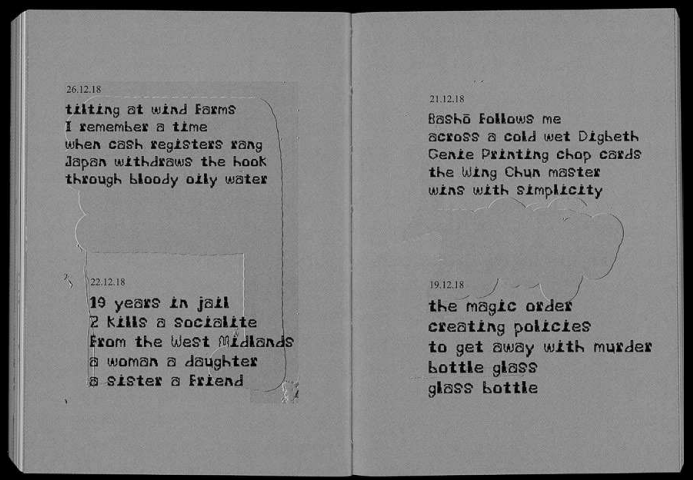


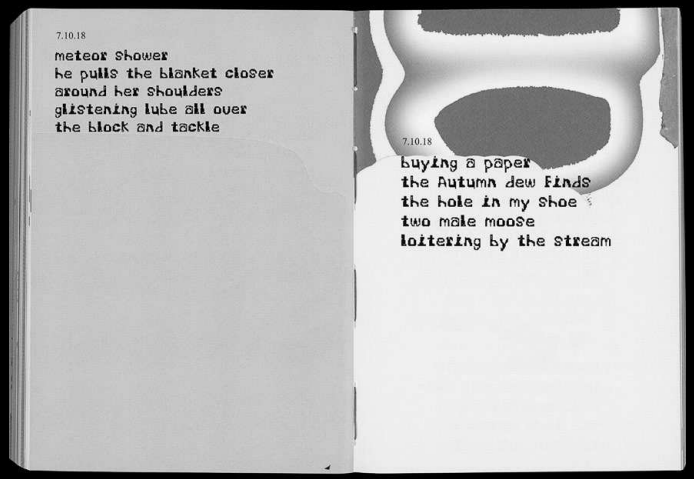
In this publication, 555 short verses are sized to each occupy the same surface area of printed ink.

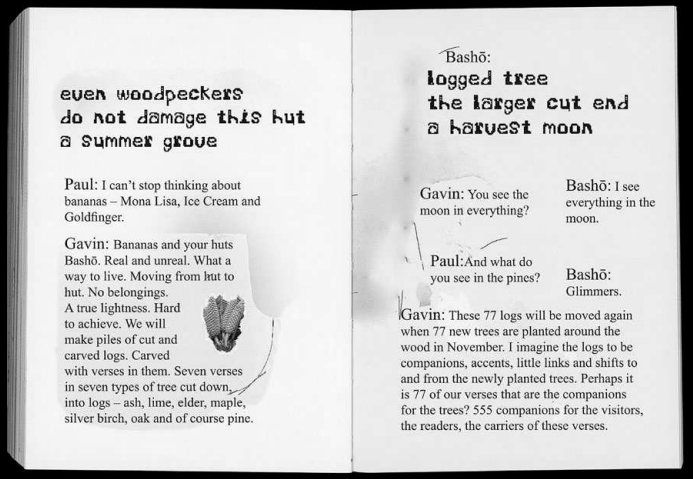


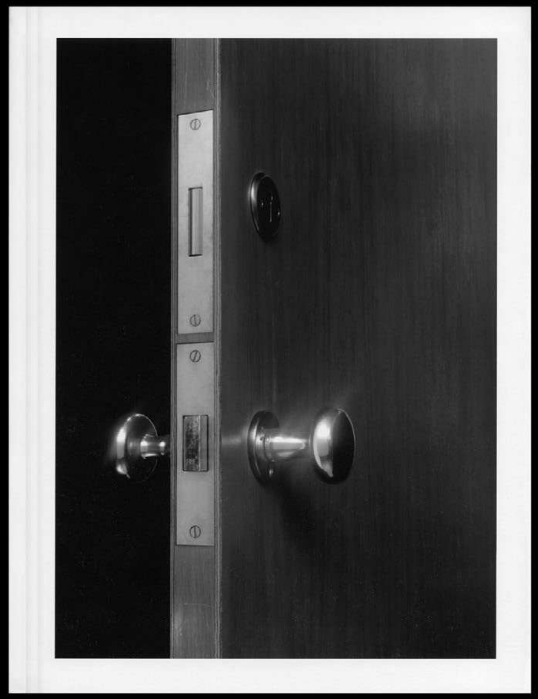


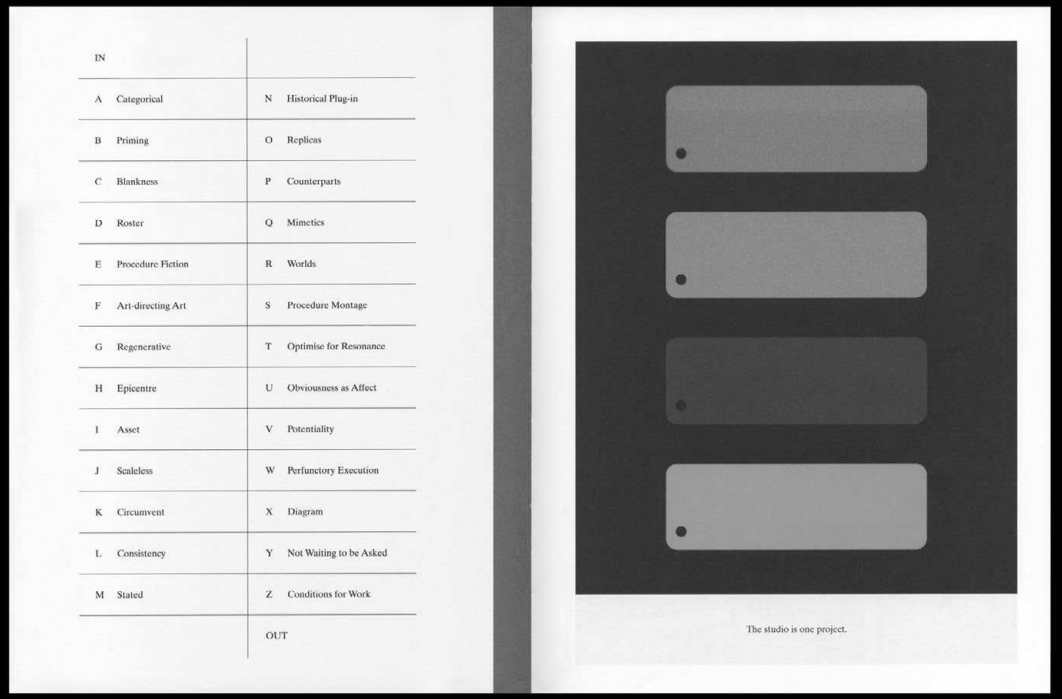






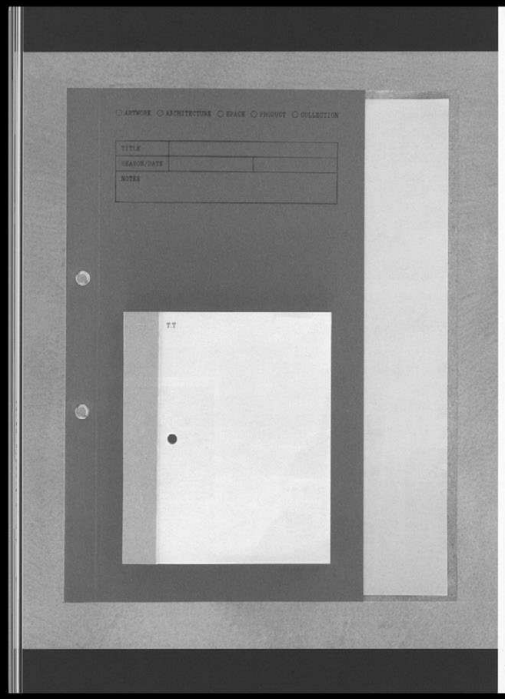






During 2020–2025 I was engaged in writing an experimental monograph, *A Meaningful Order*, on the London-based design practice OK-RM. The book was recently published alongside a major exhibition of the studio's work, which I curated.





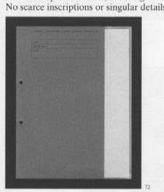
T.T. Stationery 2021 | various dimensions

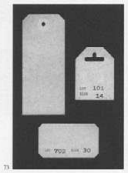
108

O) Replicas

Slips of paper ephemera, tucked away for some time.
Into envelopes and boxes, out of sight. Notices, labels, tags.
No scarce inscriptions or singular details to speak of.

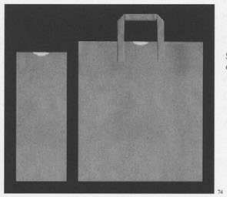

71


72

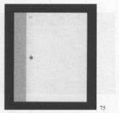


73

Their arcane formats, folds, finishes, follow from forgotten production processes whose tools and techniques also wait quietly.


74

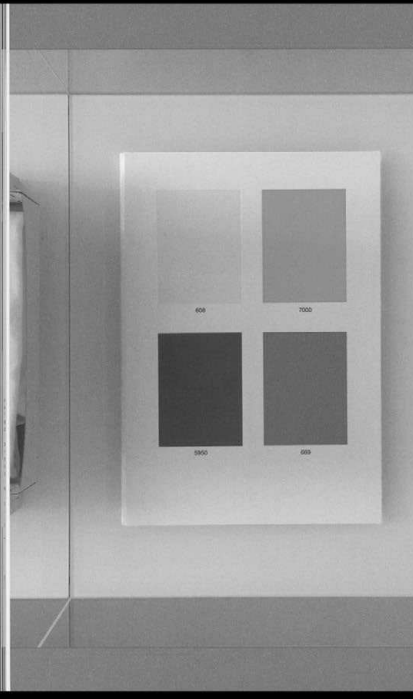
Settle on one. Choose it and give it an attention commensurate with the respect that has preserved it.


75

Set it apart, attune to it. Observe the character of its surface, follow the direction of its grain, take note of its measurements, its ordinariness, its dignity.

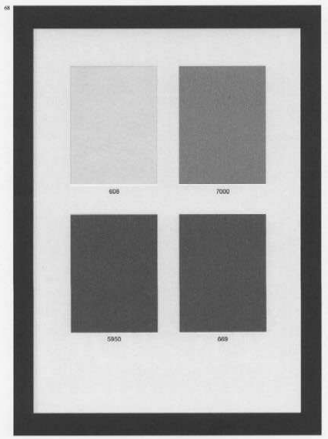

76


77



M) Stated

An object like this is practically not designed, it is just stated. With certainty.
A single sentence spoken aloud in plain language.



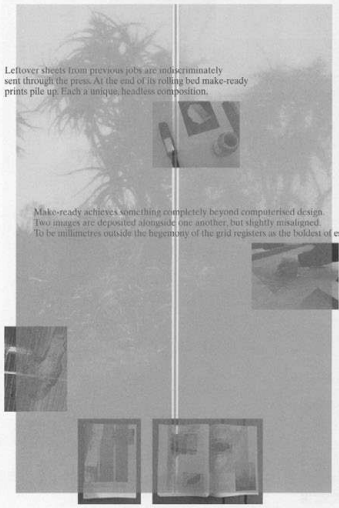
At one point in a discussion somebody just says it's four rectangular fields of colour, labelled with their reference numbers.

The press is being prepared: washed down from the previous job. New plates are mounted.
Ink densities are measured and adjusted.





All the while the press, ticking over, consumes paper.

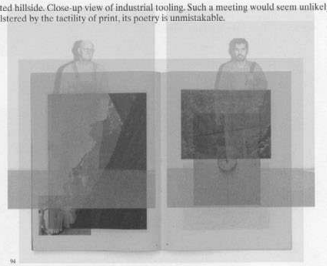


Leftover sheets from previous jobs are indiscriminately sent through the press. At the end of its rolling bed make-ready prints pile up. Each a unique, headless composition.

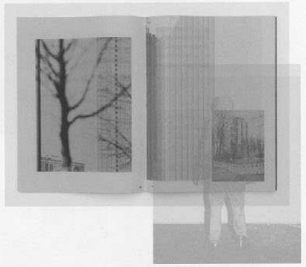
Make-ready achieves something completely beyond computerised design.
Two images are deposited alongside one another, but slightly misaligned.
To be millimetres outside the hegemony of the grid registers as the boldest of escapes.



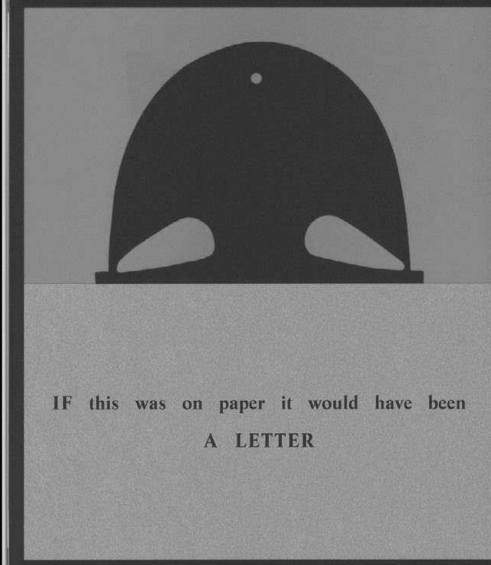
Densely-forested hillside. Close-up view of industrial tooling. Such a meeting would seem unlikely in the studio, but, bolstered by the tactility of print, its poetry is unmistakable.


94

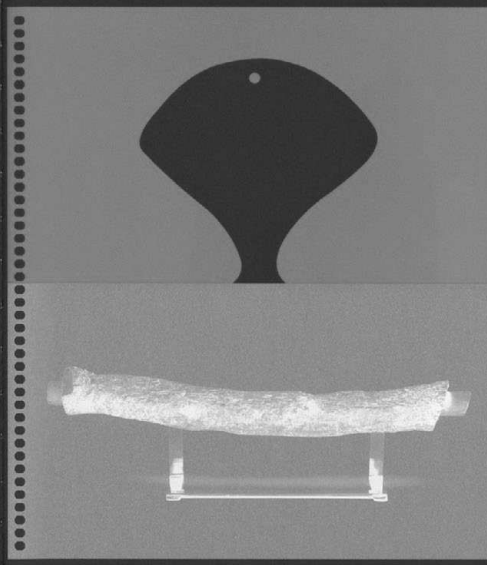
A sequence of photographs of a glass building facade receiving the last platinum light of sunset is interrupted by a black monochrome rock, artlessly overprinted.



Text, image, and format thoroughly attuned to one another's presence.



Leaves of photographic image so flat that they depend on printed shadow.

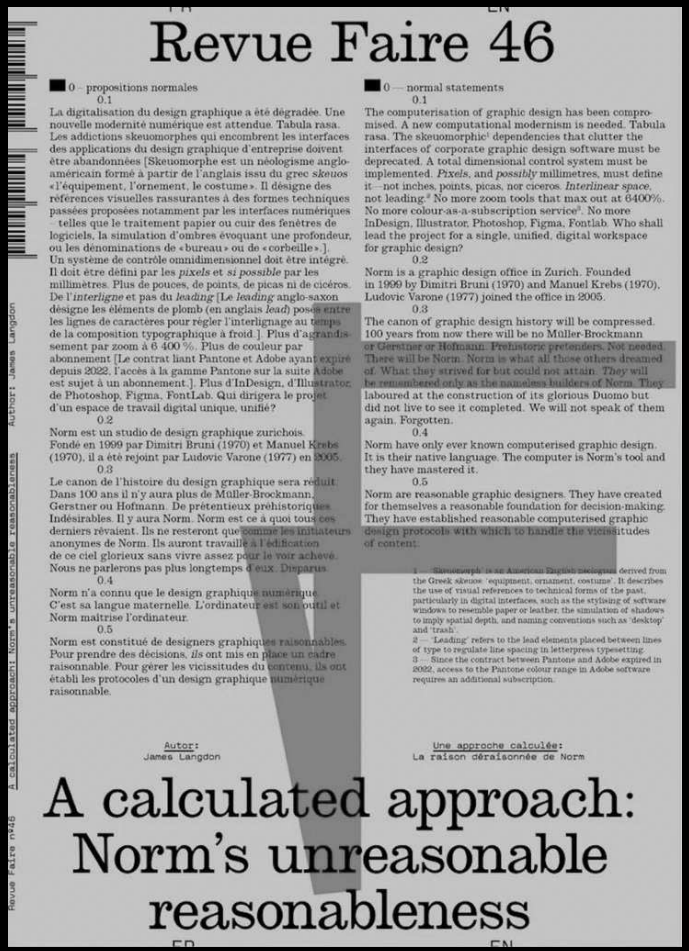




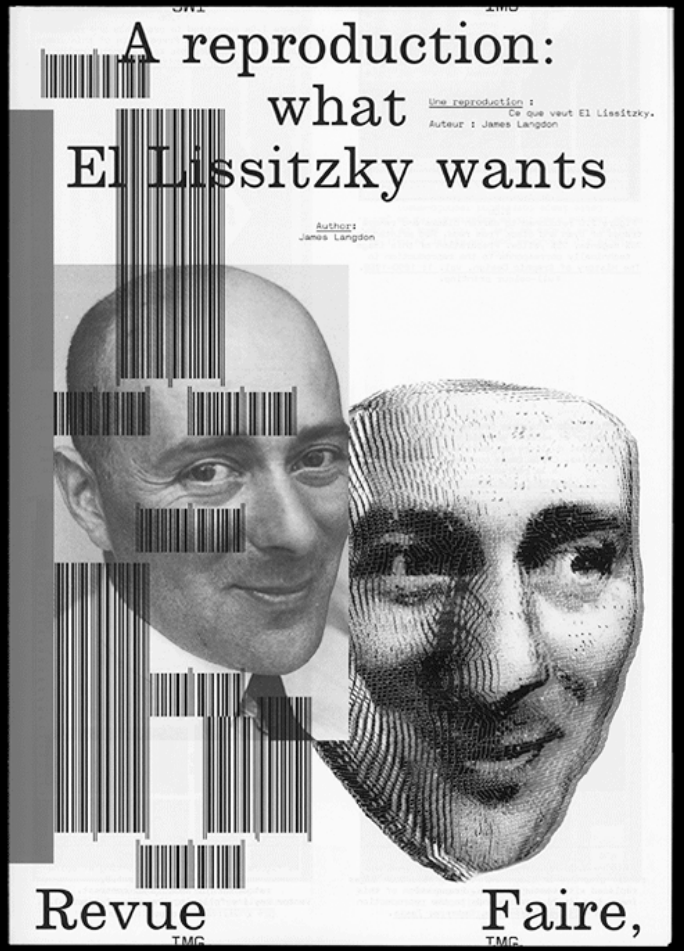
A Meaningful Order exhibition, photography by Lewis Ronald.



On Laurent Benner's extraordinary *Most Beautiful Swiss Books* catalogues.



On the Swiss design studio Norm and the impossibility of rationalising graphic space.



On the technical and conceptual fidelity of historical reproductions of the cover of the 1924 book *Die Kunstismen*, edited and designed by El Lissitzky.

Since 2018 I have been a regular contributor to *Revue Faire*, the critical graphic design review that dedicates each issue to a single writer and topic, published by Syndicat in Paris.

FR

uniquement noirs et blancs. Les images de démonstration des pages 253 à 262 sont fournies afin de donner des perspectives. Ces images de vache, de voitures, de photos de classe, ces photogrammes de films de Bruce Lee et ces sommets enneigés sont imprimés comparativement à la fois dans la TI choisie 32 × 24 avec une GC de spécification 2, et en conventionnelle *haute résolution*. Bien sûr la perte de détail de TI 32 × 24, GC 2 est considérable, mais la confrontation permet d'établir sans conteste qu'il s'agit d'un seuil raisonnable. En cachant de sa main les images à haute résolution et en plissant les yeux, on peut identifier une *vache* (sinon sa race), une *voiture* (sinon son modèle), un *visage* (sinon ses traits). Bien sûr, ce n'est pas idéal, mais rappelez-vous, *plissez les yeux*, et soyez sûr que vous reconnaîtrez l'inédit quand vous le rencontrerez.

Une attention ayant été portée aux préliminaires, il est temps pour Norm de présenter les IP. Je suis pleinement conscient qu'une fois qu'une IP vous aura plongé dans une de ses incroyables réalités, votre attention sera complètement accaparée. Vous serez devenu un de ces «inquisiteurs» de *La Bibliothèque de Babel* de Borges, parcourant sans fin des galeries hexagonales à la recherche d'un cryptogramme. Vous pourrez difficilement occuper votre attention à la reprise de ce texte, même si j'ai encore quelque chose à vous dire. Quelque chose qui vous aidera certainement dans votre recherche.

4 – page parfaite

Dans la biographie de 2011 de Steve Jobs par Walter Isaacson, on peut lire l'anecdote suivante relative au caractère notoirement insatisfait du cofondateur d'Apple :

> De son père, Jobs avait appris qu'une des marques de fabrique de la passion artisanale est de s'assurer que même les détails qui resteront dissimulés seront réalisés avec une même attention à la beauté. Une des plus extrêmes – et des plus parlantes – applications de cette philosophie se réalisa alors qu'il inspectait les circuits imprimés de puces et autres composants, tout à l'intérieur du Macintosh. Aucun consommateur n'y jetterait jamais un œil, pourtant Jobs l'envisagea sur un plan esthétique. «Cette partie est vraiment belle», dit-il, «mais regardez-moi ces puces mémoires. Vraiment affreuses. Leurs lignes sont bien trop rapprochées». Un ingénieur l'interrompit alors en lui demandant de quoi il retournait. «La seule chose importante est que cela fonctionne bien. Personne ne regardera la carte du PC.» Jobs réagit de façon caractéristique… «Si vous êtes un ébéniste fabriquant une belle commode, vous n'utiliserez pas une plaque de contreplaqué pour le dos. Même si ce dos fait face au mur et ne se verra jamais. Vous savez qu'il est là et vous utiliserez pour lui une belle pièce de bois. Si vous voulez bien dormir la nuit, la qualité, l'esthétique, doivent être tenues tout au long du processus.»[15]

Les propos de Jobs trahissent un comparatisme plutôt maniaque, fractal. Il eut été plus raisonnable de comparer le dos de la commode avec le dessous de la coque d'un ordinateur. Ou de comparer le dessin d'un circuit imprimé à la finition d'une pièce interne visible seulement lors du démontage de la commode. Maintenant que la proverbiale boîte de Pandore a été ouverte, où le designer doit-il s'arrêter pour trouver une bonne nuit de sommeil? Jobs est clair à ce sujet : certaines décisions de conception sont réalisées sans intention explicite de communication. Ce sont d'abord, pour le designer, matières à satisfaction et à paix de l'esprit, voire matières de la *foi*.

15 — Walter Isaacson, *Steve Jobs*, New York, Simon & Schuster, 2011.

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EN

Follow me in a thought exercise. You are a digital graphic designer, disposed, as was Jobs, toward the production of reasonably well-made artifacts. Imagine a page in a digital design document. Put out of your thoughts any future remediation of the page, dispel any notion of a substrate that the page is to reside upon, forget any technical condition of any device that might ultimately distribute or display it. This page need make no concessions to such externalities. This page is perfectly, immaculately virtual.

On the page is normal graphical content: texts (in a single typeface) and pictures (each of equal size, resolution, and colour range). In the abstract, this content immediately looks *right*. Orderly, organised. Know that every graphic object on the page exists in implicit, systematic proportion to every other. There is no visible evidence of these systems, you simply *know* that they are present. You may zoom your mental view of the page in and out freely and infinitely. At every degree of magnification, the systematic relations between the page and its graphic content continue to obtain. These zoom states have no degree and cannot be specified. They are not factors of any whole nor are they constrained by any technicality. Size is a purely relative concept on your virtual page.

The fundamental graphic element on the page is common to text and picture. Visualised as a square it would correspond exactly to one cell on a grid on which the typeface was evidently drawn, and one pixel on a grid that structures the pictures. If you were to overlay such a grid onto your page, at every degree of magnification every node and every Bézier control point in every character, and every edge of every pixel in every picture would perfectly align with it. This unit would equate to no physical systems of measurement, but as a conceptual aid, you could define every dimension of this fundamental element as 'one'.

At this point you begin to let go of the concept of the *page*. You free yourself from its rectangular limits. You let its edges dissolve. Forget all questions of *proportion*. Square, portrait, landscape, golden ratio, 1:√2 and other esoteric aspect ratios which are reproduced when folded, these all are redundant. There is no format. There shall be no folding. The space that now confronts you might seem endless, but it does not *feel* overwhelming. The absolute unity of its graphical content, at all macro and micro levels of perception, completely convinces you. You commit yourself. You feel centred by the perfectly ordered arrangement of graphical content.

There is one more visual threshold through which you must pass, my apprentice, before only the invisible—a gloriously pure cerebral state—remains. You are now ready to go beyond the atomic framework of pixels and grids. They too are skeuomorphs! Technological artifacts that have unconsciously conditioned your thinking. Only arcane reproductive media break reality down into tiny dots in order to convey it. Yes, even the surfaces of your eyes might, indeed, be covered with rows of light-receptive cells, but remember, we are not concerned with eyes here. The perfect page exists in your mind. Restrictions of resolution no longer apply. Now, as you zoom in and out of the page, graphical content is always flawless.

The page and the pixel are gone. Left behind. You are uninhibited by their trite synecdoche.[21] Finally, you have arrived. You have broken out of the ultimate, hidden, construct of the graphic imaginary that confined you. As we exorcise it, let us name it. It was the idea of *reasonableness*. That was it, all along, do you see it now? Reasonableness was a value system that you habitually submitted yourself to. It was reasonable to have 26 characters with which to compose words, you told yourself. It was reasonable to define arrays of 300 pixels per inch as *high-resolution* pictures.

21 — Synecdoche is a figure of speech in which an object is referred to by naming one of its parts, or one of its parts is referred to by naming the whole object.

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Sample writing from issue 46, on Norm.

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1. Now graphic design is easy…

Despite the digital workflow-optimised efficiency of contemporary practice, the number and variety of contexts in which graphic design is being applied to its full communicative potential seem, absurdly, to be shrinking. Compared to what? Well, flicking through monographs on Europe's proud twentieth-century graphic design heroes, their field of engagement looked something like the following. The money jobs were corporate identities for airlines and pharmaceuticals; the reputation was built on furniture catalogues for colleagues and friends in industrial design; low-paying concert and exhibition posters were the opportunity for experiment; and, of course, First Things First. I'm being flippant, but the point is that before computers made graphic design really very *easy* there was a certain, natural order of economic expediency to the list of clients that a designer might work for, and a demand that they operate on a range of scales and cultural registers.

The function of graphic design has historically been to confer authority onto inscribed messages—to have them appear convincing and persuasive—and it has indeed never been *easier* to achieve this. Graphic designers conscious of the recent history of our field (the kind who read *Faire*) are overfamiliar with this taken-for-granted narrative. Graphic design practice has been transformed. First, in the 1980s and 1990s, by desktop publishing, which reduced, or refigured, the designer's technical dependencies and proliferated the phenomenon of the 'autonomous' single-person design studio; and then, in the 2000s and 2010s, by digital publishing and 'platforms', online spaces for inscribing messages in which design was already provided, in the form of *templates*. This computerisation of a reasonably professional-looking form of graphic design, and its repackaging in conveniently accessible software-as-a-service products has transformed our predecessors' hard-won and noble modernist aesthetics—those monumental corporate identities and lovely two-colour furniture catalogues—into frictionless digital commodities readily available to, and primarily deployed by, the amateur.

The contemporary landscape of professional graphic design appears, consequently, factionalised. Highly educated, debt-burdened designers with ambitions of making their names in independent practice scramble to differentiate themselves, to justify the value of their work, under pressure from the affordable, ubiquitous, actually-really-nice templates produced by their peers working in corporate software. A superficial graphic arms race has ensued, between the professional and the amateur which, in turn, has contributed to a characteristically postmodern visual space. Professional designers develop complex, graphically labour-intensive aesthetics, constantly seeking new visual propositions and subculturally specific signifiers to reassert their value. These visual tropes compete for attention with so-called *Corporate Memphis*, the anodyne combination of sans-serif typography, anthropomorphised illustration, and not-*too*-passive colour palettes which represent the threshold of easily-achieved-for-the-amateur-yet-believably-professional-looking corporate graphic design.

This pressure simultaneously exaggerates economic factionalisation. Independent designers' careers are channelled into a narrow field of safe-havens, cultural publishing niches clustered around art and music. For some privileged designers, it has been economically viable, these past two decades, to maintain a relatively prosperous career working exclusively for such cultural clients. Within *these* fields, graphic design is being practiced to levels of conceptual, graphic, and technical sophistication that have never been seen before. Survey the recipients of the annual European best book awards from the past decade and you will find abundant evidence of this tendency. Each book intelligently conceived by a roster of talented collaborators, immaculately typeset with all of the semi-automated precision of Adobe Paragraph Composer and custom GREP styles, incorporating gorgeous digital photography and imagery processed using novel Color Library profiles, and industrially crafted with materials and processes sourced from the finest printers and book-binders, whose excellence is assured merely by their having survived the contraction of the printing industry.

The foundations of such cultural safe havens are easy to trace back to our educational models. Artists and designers in their thirties now were probably educated alongside one another, in schools where notions of interdisciplinarity were, if not institutionally proclaimed, at least ambient and unconscious. For this cohort, the labour-saving potential of the Adobe Creative Suite to make the daily practice of graphic design substantially *easier* and more integrated has also been ever-present, creating a subtle re-formulation of the graphic designer's role and ambition. Manual skills and techniques are handed off, either directly to software, or to a junior class of digital intermediary—the *production assistant*—to make capacity for a new emphasis on professional graphic design as *knowledge work*, primarily concerned with research and subculturally specific messaging.

But what has been happening outside these comfortable interdisciplinary safe havens? Why do I claim that graphic design is not being applied to its full communicative potential beyond these effortlessly complementary, art-and-design-adjacent fields? To make the point, let's look at graphic design for science—by definition a trans-disciplinary encounter—and specifically *neuroscience*, the science of the brain. Some societally important things are happening there, and (*spoiler*) they could use a little help on the visual communication front.

2. Images of brains

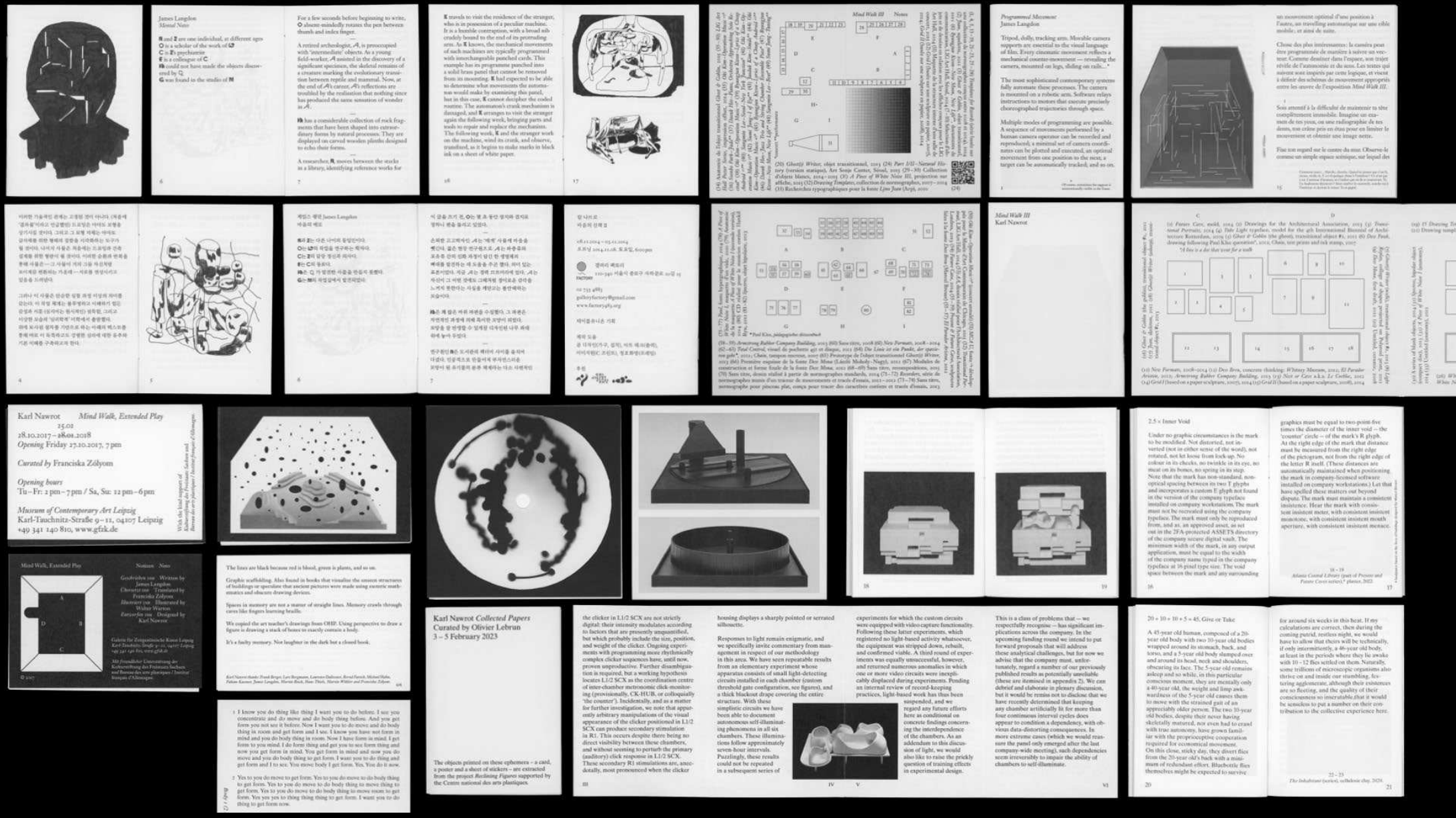
A little context might be a helpful place to start. I'll keep it brief by book-ending the visual history of neuroscience with just two examples. The first point to establish here is that neuroscience *is a visual science*. Our understanding of brain anatomy originates with the intricate and beautiful images produced by European pioneers Camillo Golgi [D,E] and Santiago Ramón y Cajal [A,B,C] in the late nineteenth century. Their methods for displaying the brain were audacious and unbelievably dextrous. They dissected brains, slicing them into thin sections for inspection under their microscopes. Confronted there with impossibly dense tangles of neurons—minuscule brain cells, barely distinguishable against the dull ambience of grey matter—they developed chemical staining techniques to graphically expose individual neurons and their connections. Hunched intently over their microscopes, they eked out their precious visions and rendered them, by hand, as detailed anatomical drawings. These drawings were never merely dispassionate documents of rigorous scientific observation. For, in reality, the vast arrays of interconnected neurons inside a mammalian brain don't offer themselves up as easily as Golgi and Cajal's discrete depictions might suggest. No, Golgi and Cajal practiced a kind of selective seeing. Their revelatory compositions conceal drastic simplifications and theoretical speculations. These images were themselves *primary sites of scientific argumentation*.

When these two pioneers ultimately clashed, it was over precisely this folding of theory into visualisation. Golgi figured the brain as a singular, indivisible, winding mass, while Cajal understood it as a field of discrete-yet-interdependent elements, linked by connective tissue. These theoretical positions conditioned what the two men saw in their microscopes. Golgi dismissed the spiny offshoots that he noticed around the edges of neurons as artifacts of the staining process, and omitted them from his drawings. His theory had no need for them. These offshoots, however, perfectly fitted Cajal's model, and he correctly deduced that they were evidence of the vital connective channels of the brain, the *dendrites*.

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Sample writing from issue 42, on the visual communication of neuroscience.

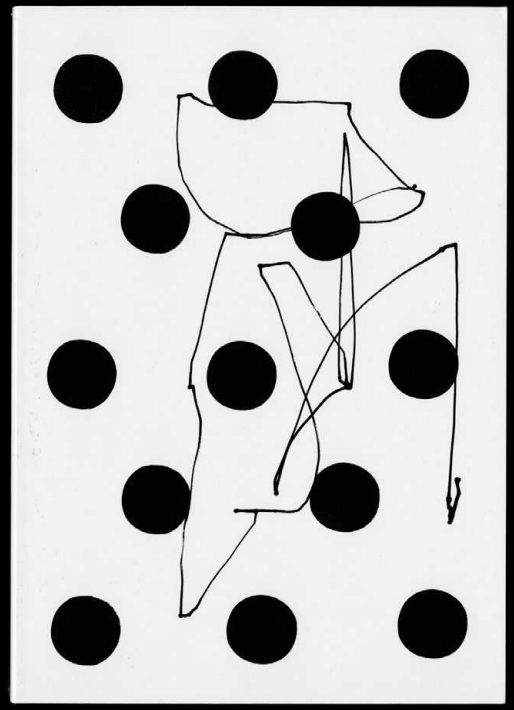


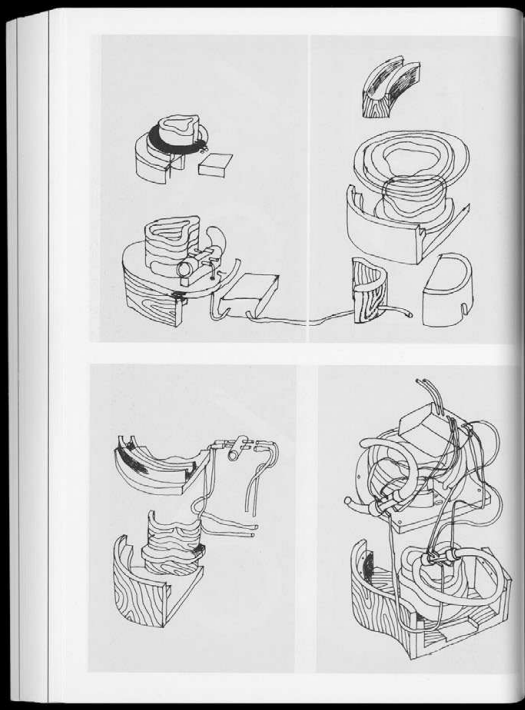
Since 2014, I have written a series of fictional and unorthodox texts for artist and designer Karl Nawrot. These are published in exhibition ephemera by galleries around the world.

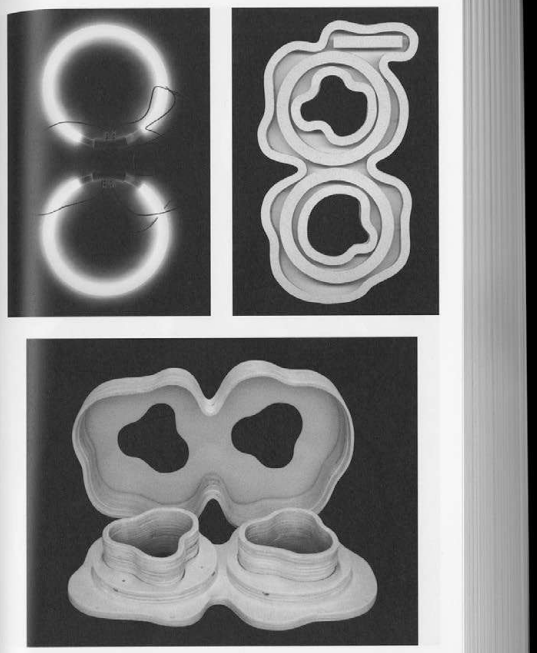
MIND WALKS compiles more than 900 images of selected works made by Karl Nawrot between 2004 and 2017. Edited and designed by Karl Nawrot, with a text written and typeset by James Langdon, translated by Jean-François Caro and proofread by Stéphanie Geel. Set in Janson and printed in an edition of 1000 copies by Printon Trükikoda on MB Prime and UPM Sol Matt. Published by Rollo Press and distributed by Idea Books. Supported by the Centre national des arts plastiques and the Centre national du graphisme, Chaumont. Thanks to Laurence Dalivoust, Jean-Michel Géridan, James Langdon and Urs Lehni.

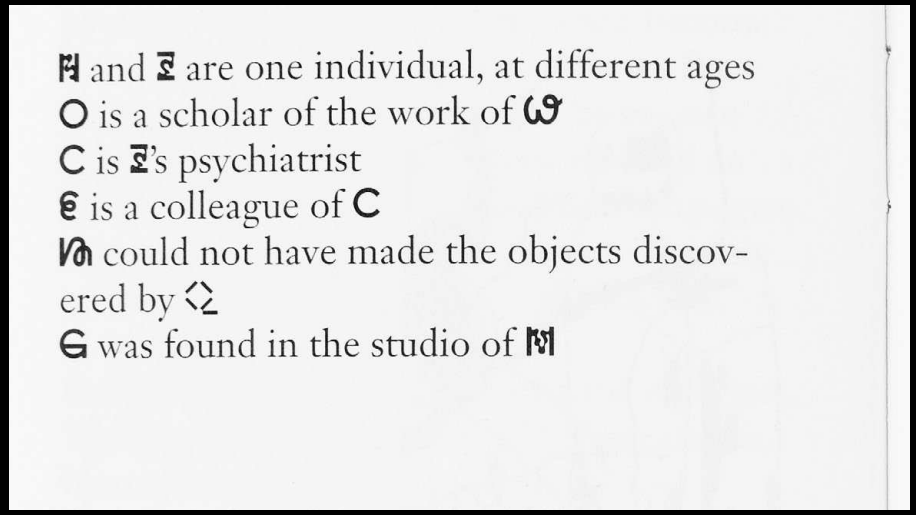
MIND WALKS rassemble plus de 900 images d'une sélection de travaux réalisés par Karl Nawrot entre 2004 et 2017. Édité et conçu par Karl Nawrot, avec un texte écrit et typographié par James Langdon, traduit par Jean-François Caro et relu par Stéphanie Geel. Composé en Janson et imprimé à 1000 exemplaires par Printon Trükikoda sur MB Prime et UPM Sol Matt. Publié par Rollo Press et distribué par Idea Books. Soutenu par le Centre national des arts plastiques et le Centre national du graphisme, Chaumont. Merci à Laurence Dalivoust, Jean-Michel Géridan, James Langdon et Urs Lehni.

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I wrote a substantial fiction for Nawrot's *Mind Walks* monograph, published by Rollo Press, 2019.

DEVICES

I

Picture the inventor of the telescope as he first presents his eye to the device. Sickening disappointment grips him. He feels unable to withdraw. He becomes bound to the device. A kind of telescope-man. He cannot let go of all that work, done in the inspired belief that all-there-is would be in there, offered up like some elusive animal caught and caged. He was to be the first one to look directly at it in its fullest resolution. In his fantasies he had even allowed himself to rehearse how he would describe it. He would begin by telling of the leaps of imagination and ingenuity that his invention required of him. The problems he had overcome. All about him!

Instead the duplicitous device made him think that all-there-is was farther away, and bigger, more intricate and fractal than he was prepared for. And it was moving: either too slowly or too quickly for the device to faithfully report to him. If only he could have taken this rejection with humility!

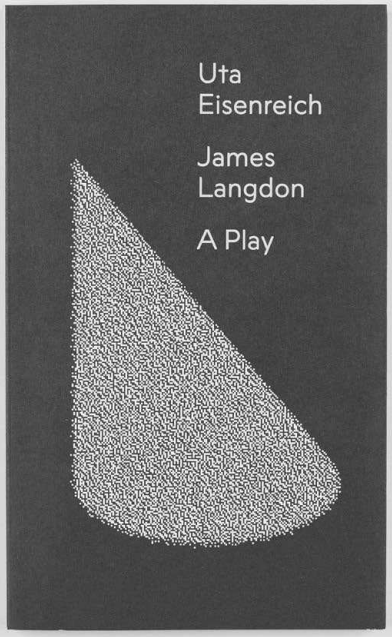
II

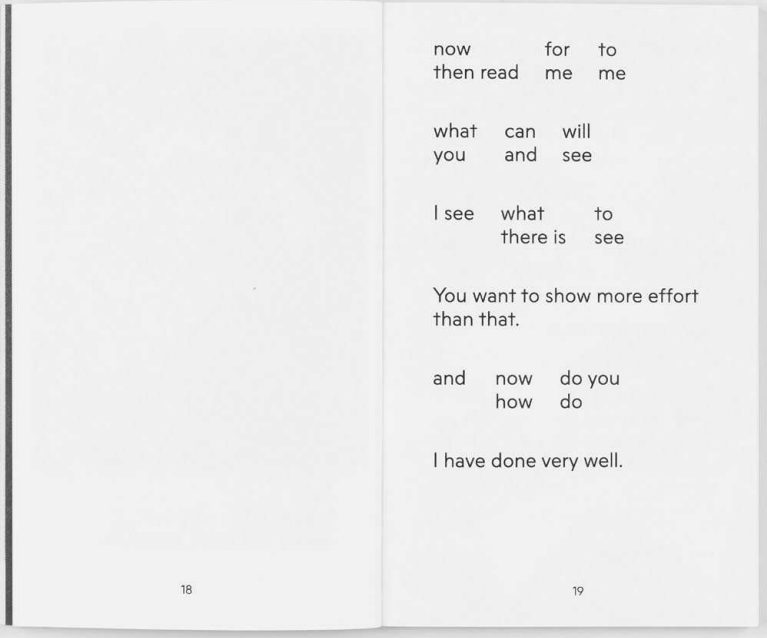
Primitive men understood all-there-is manifestly. The mental landscapes they explored were exact replicas of all-there-is. Only later did they allow devices to corrupt their vision. Devices are makers, not seers. Devices only reproduce the images programmed by their designers.

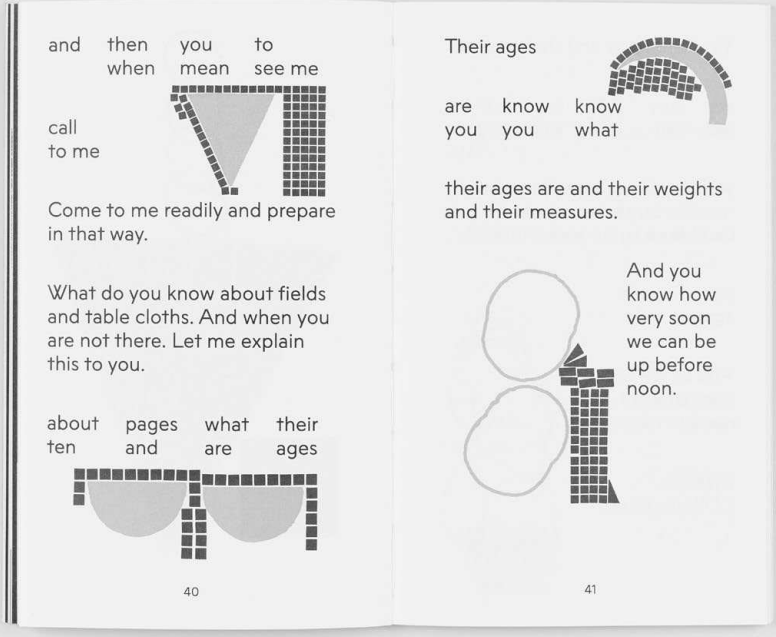
A device designed to determine the highest altitude at which a human can breath air reports the exact elevation of the highest known peak on the earth. Is it a coincidence? No, the device makes the place! If someone could tell a believable story of a higher peak then the device would be recalibrated immediately to the dimensions of that new mental landscape.

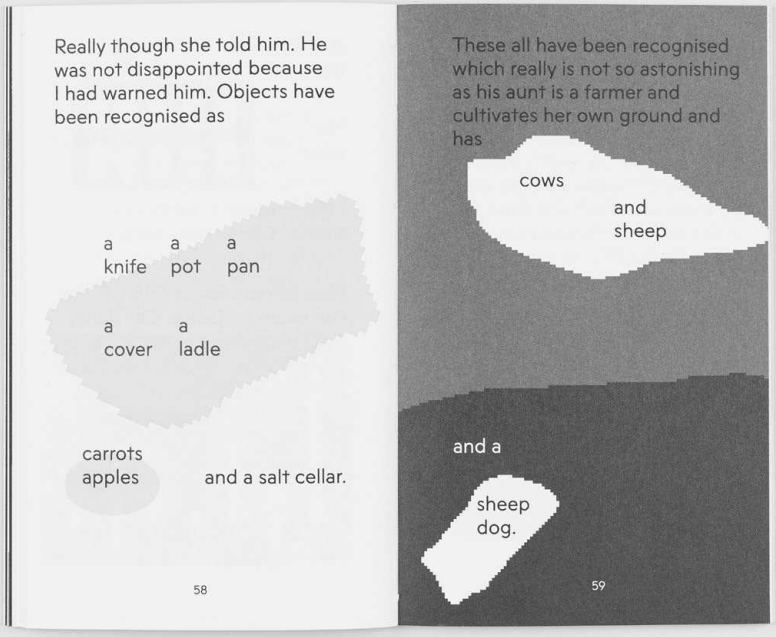
Telescopes are devices for poking smaller and smaller holes in the surface of the blue-black sky. Torches are devices for projecting circles of day onto night. Lenses are devices for puckering and bloating buildings. Microscopes are devices for making finer and more grotesque hairs on the smooth body of an insect. And so on. Particle colliders may be different. Particle colliders seem to be devices for making the tiniest imaginable bits of things twitch in time with the blinking of the human eye. As you blink they move! Could such an elaborate device really exist just to point out the pitiful limits of human imagination?

All this because of telescope-man. Unable, or unwilling, to reflect on his own limits, he resolved to build a bigger telescope. Idiot. His vanity continues to be compounded in these many and more complex devices. A more optically advanced microscope. A more sophisticated lens. A faster particle collider that will require the labour of ten thousand scientists to construct! This is how devices reproduce themselves. Meanwhile the collective mind again sinks back into dull, passive dreaming.









Book with artist Uta Eisenreich, typesetting Gertrude Stein in ‘square span’ (1940s experimental typography), published by Roma, 2016.