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EMIGRE MAGAZINE - A CRITICAL ANALYSIS.

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RAY GUN

by *Beach Culture* they would think that we were following the leader. I was told that the advertising director at Nike had a completely Spartan office with one coffee table and the only ornamentation in his office was a copy of *Beach Culture*. I would hear things like this all the time. Just on an emotional level I thought the magazine was a very successful piece of work. **E M I G R E : Was it success**ful then mostly because of the design? **N E I L** No I think it was the whole thing. We didn't know each other. I went to David and said "Here's the deal. I am giving you work that is going to live up to your design. And my reviews have been just as good as David's reviews. I have stacks of reviews from *The New York Times* and *Esquire* talking about the writing in *Beach Culture*. Anyway, I was not afraid to take my words and marry them to something that was a very flashy overpowering design because I knew that once you got around to reading them they were going to hold your attention. As an editor I got slammed in my community left and right by people who usually didn't bother reading the magazine. They felt that my art director was hurting my writing. **E M I G R E :**

You are every graphic designer's dream editor! I was reading your introduction in issue №6 where you talk about the design awards that *Beach Culture* won and you say that "speaking from an editorial point of view, it is a unique pleasure to have the words you love be treated with such visual brilliance and respect." Being a designer myself, I could hardly believe this statement coming from an editor, since most editors consider their words as sacred. And your writing wasn't just interpreted by a designer; it was at times made entirely illegible. Could you try to explain what it is that David did that made you let him get away with some of these extreme designs? **N E I L** We had disagreements throughout the process, generally one major fight per issue. There was one instance in particular where he had made type illegible that I felt was information oriented and very essential to the reading of the piece. I told him that he couldn't do that. Not that "You can't do it." but "This is why you can't, etc." and he laid off. There were a lot of articles that he was allowed to play with in terms of illegibility. Most of the pages that were illegible were pages like the contents page, the "Coming Up" page stuff that was just pages that I felt were irrelevant to the deeper meaning of this magazine. I wanted the reader to spend time with the magazine. And if the pages that he obscured were pages that typically lead to making the reader's job easier I couldn't have cared less. When you went through the magazine on a page by page basis there were very few pages where the actual text was illegible. I heard that *Beach Culture* was considered illegible but there was really no type obscured that I thought was essential. There were always articles that I liked better than other articles and in those cases a strong design could prop them up but most of the time text and design were equal. **E M I G R E :** What are the most important changes you need to implement in order for *Ray Gun* to last beyond six issues? **N E I L** What do you mean? **E M I G R E : U**ltimately, at least to me, the real success of a magazine depends on whether it can survive and turn a profit. It's easy to go your own way and lose money. That doesn't take much talent. **N E I L** I could have been successful with *Beach Culture* had I had a more supportive backer. It wasn't a question of having enough backing, it was a matter of having a supportive backer. Editorially and artistically, and David fights with me all the time on this, what I had planned to do with *Beach Culture* was to work on it for about ten issues and then functioning in a supervisory capacity turn it over to

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INTRODUCTION

What is Emigre Magazine ?

Emigre Magazine is a large format (A3) publication that is released not more than four times a year by *Emigre Graphics*. The company is made up of a husband and wife team, namely Rudy Vanderlans and Zuzana Licko. *Emigre Graphics* are based in Sacremento, California.

Emigre Graphics is at present a record label, a mail order service for their own products which includes T-shirts, posters and other parafinaliae. The mail order service also includes the font foundry, back issues of the magazine are also sold through it. Rudy Vanderlans and Zuzana Licko also do freealnce design work in and around the Sacremento area for various organisations.

The magazine publishes a wide variety of articles ranging from contemporary design related issues to showcases of past designers work that have relevance today. The magazine also showcases the work of other designers in a wide variety of ways ranging from interviews to actually using the typefaces which the featured designer has conceived. These typefaces usually go on to be released by *Emigre Graphics* as part of their ever expanding font library. The large majority of which were designed by Zuzana Licko over the past ten years.

Emigre magazine is unique because each page in it is different from the last. The overall look of an issue is different from the previous. The magazine has no grid structure and no set typeface. In fact it would suffice to say that *Emigre* magazine has no structure whatsoever. Dubbed by its creators as *the magazine to ignore boundaries*, it attempts wherever possible to ignore the rules of typographic design and layout and explore new possibilities of page make-up.

FIGURE 1+2, opposite show the difference between a typical page from the style magazine *I-D* and *Emigre*. The difference being that *I-D* is an altogether more structured publication, it possesses a grid structure and a set typeface. It also has a fixed position and size for its masthead which Emigre does not. It is also predominantly a full colour publication, where as Emigre is always monochrome throughout. *I-D* is a much more handisized magazine

whereas *Emigre* is twice its size.

This contrast is typical of the way *Emigre* and nearly all contemporary magazines differ, for the most part all magazines are printed on a glossy paper, this supposedly is to signify that the publication is a quality one. *Emigre* rejects this gloss and opts for a rough, off white paper. Again, unlike its contemporaries, *Emigre* invariably has no contents page or page numbers.

The designer, Rudy Vanderlans has made *Emigre* magazine as hard to swallow as possible it seems. This follows on in the nature of the articles which are often hard (but not impossible) to follow. *Emigre* is not for the average man in the street and aims itself at graphic designers although this was not originally the intended target.

Emigre magazine was started in 1984 by Rudy Vanderlans, Zuzana Licko and a group of friends who were graduates of U.C Berkeley, California. They were frustrated because they had no commercial vehicle for their work. The work ranged from poetry, short stories, film critiques and illustrations. Early *Emigres* published work that ignored and overstepped boundaries of taste or established aesthetic.

The magazines market is predominantly graphic designers,

and so the magazine challenges on a professional level the do's and dont's of the design business.

Emigre demonstrates that there is always another way to go about looking at design and that form does not always need to follow function. It sets out to ignore the existing boundaries and limitations that designers and the establishment (tradition) put on graphic design as a medium of expression. The magazine attempts to explore and explode myths about design from the past and the present.

The following thesis is an attempt to evaluate the work of Vanderlans and Licko in a critical light. I will analyse the work of both and and try to give historic parallels that I feel have relevance to the subject in question. The magazine itself will serve as my main source of reference. The fonts that Licko designed will also serve as reference.

Iwill analyse the work in regards to style and content and the fact that more often than not the style is the content. The question is to what extent does it challenge and how successful is it at rocking the boat and Does *Emigre* magazine show a way forward for graphic design or is it just pointlessly Avant Garde ?
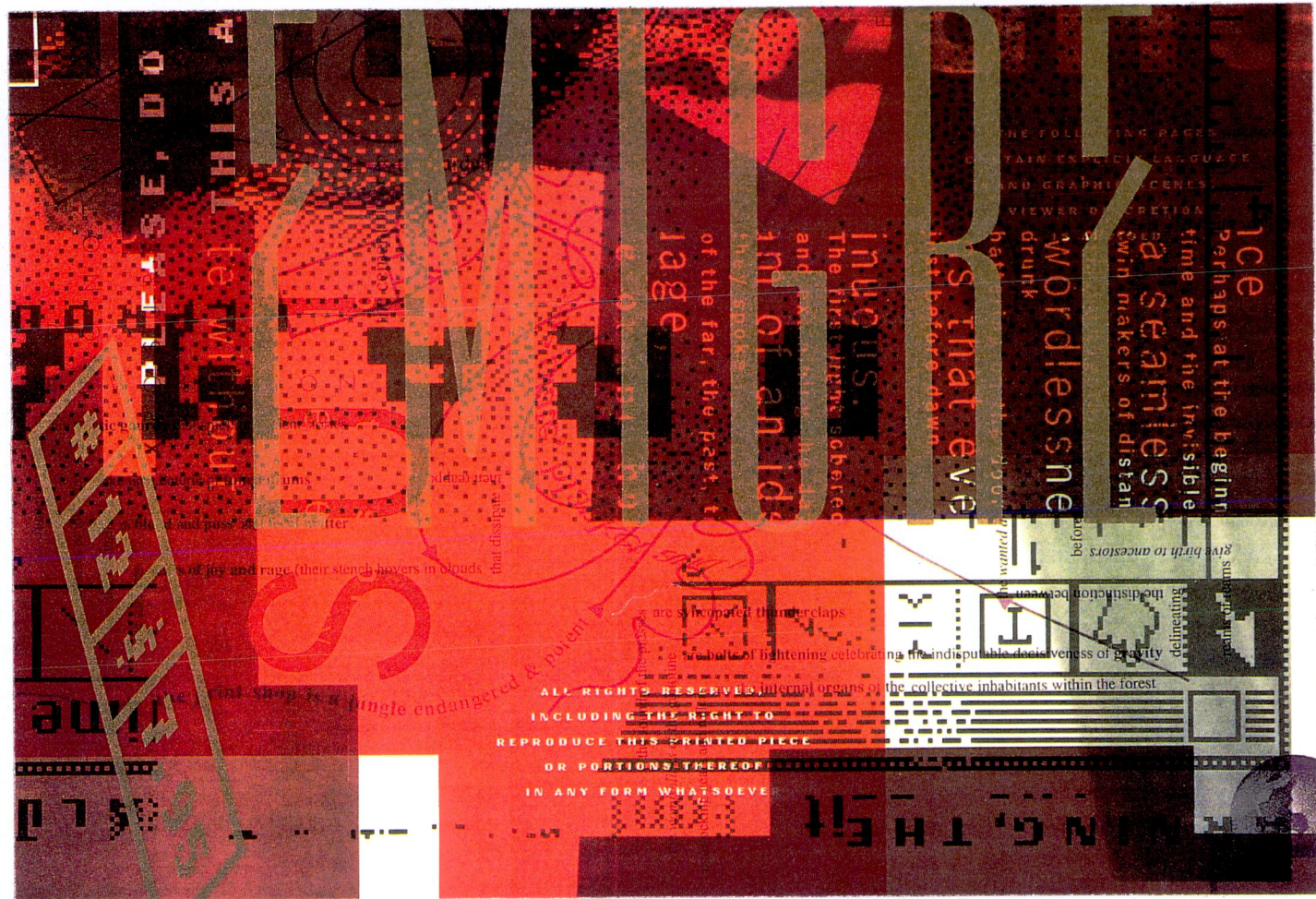
Figure.3 Emigre#12.

Figure.4, Emigre #4, centre page spread. 1986

CHAPTER I

This chapter contains a biography of *Emigre* magazines creators , Rudy Vanderlans and Zuzana Licko. It concentrates on Vanderlans and his education in Holland and his influences . It also attempts to identify what Vanderlans is rebelling against.

Rudy Vanderlans was born in the Hague, Holland, in 1955. There he studied graphic design at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts. After graduating in 1978, and working for three years in Holland, he decided that the world of design was not really what he had expected it to be. Vanderlans describes a sort of dark shadow looming over him in Holland, and this shadow he later realised to be the tradition of Swiss and Dutch design.

He explains how he felt great disillusionment and decided that he would return to college and do a post-graduate course.
(Thrift, Julia, 1992 pg.8)

It was at this stage that he came to the conclusion that if he was to be free of all the doubts and disillusion that he must make a clean break of it. So, Vanderlans, like so many others (Irish included) decided that he would travel to the land of 'opportunity', America.

At that time most design in Europe was still heavily influenced by the Bauhaus school, and the Royal Academy, too, was very rigid and very strict. .....Rudy Vanderlans (Thrift, Julia, 1992 pg.14.)

When he reached America he travelled around and eventually settled in Berkeley, California. There he enrolled in a post graduate course in Photography in U.C Berkeley. It was here that he met his wife, Czechoslovakian-born designer, Zuzana Licko . After graduating from U.C Berkeley he worked as a freelance designer and illustrator for about three years. During this time he worked for a newspaper doing illustrations. It was through this occupation that he and Licko first encountered the Apple Macintosh. A computer that Apple were developing as a tool for designers and illustrators. Vanderlans and Licko were invited, with a large group of other illustrators by the editor of *Macworld* magazine, to come and test out the machine and its capabilities. The

technology was still in its infancy but Vanderlans and Licko saw great possibilities in what they referred to as the 'incredible visual orientation of this ugly little primitive machine.' ....Emigre Graphics. (Thrift, Julia, 1992 pg.10.)

Soon after that in 1984 they started Emigre magazine with a group of friends. They relied on a typewriter to set the articles and other text in the magazine. FIGURE, 5. This had its limitations and soon Vanderlans and Licko felt the need to have a choice of typeface when putting the magazine together. This need was fulfiled when they were introduced to a program called Font Editor, which meant that they could design their own fonts, and have a choice of typeface in the magazines production.

It was Licko who set about the task of designing the fonts. Licko up to this point had no interest in font design but became intrigued when she began to use the Macintosh for the purpose.

So Emigre magazine developed and with it came the discovery for the creators that the sales of the magazine were very low. They attributed this to the fact that the magazine had no real focus. They realised that to sell more copies that they must focus on a subject. The other contributors slowly drifted away and Vanderlans and Licko were left to go it alone. After a number of further issues they realised that the magazine had now developed a large following among the graphic design community in California and so Emigre magazine had found a focus and therefore a purpose.

One of Vanderlans greatest influences was Milton Glaser, an illustrator turned graphic designer, in fact an artist producing convincing and vibrant work without any formal design training, Talking about his own work, Glaser once said in an interview, (Heller, Steve.1986 pg.54-57) that what he was trying to do was push the bounds of legibility, and like Vanderlans, was trying to challenge established design practice. Glaser, in the same interview, expressed a discontent with the traditional demarcations that exist between designers and illustrators.

Vanderlans himself works on a very illustrative level, his pages having an almost painterly quality, and sometimes so heavily endowed with layers of type they start to take on the personality of a weaving or tapestry. Some pages are so

sparce as to resemble a minimalist painting. One thing that is consistent all the way through the magazine is the lack of consistency. This goes in total contrast to Vanderlans' training in Holland and indeed against the teachings of nearly all designers in the twentieth century.
Vanderlans rejected the teachings of the International style or Swiss Typography and the notion that a designs form must always follow its function. The International Style embodied the reasoning that because the main function of design was to communicate a message, the medium should remain neutral, so as not to subtract from the message. The use of the grid and the use of neutral or inexpressive sans serif typefaces such as Helvetica or Futura were the main characteristics of the International Style.

Vanderlans set about creating an aesthetic that embodied the notion of personal expression in design and rejects the neutral and over structured aesthetic of his early design education. Vanderlans' strict education in Holland in the teachings of the Swiss tradition are an integral part of what his style became. To attempt to break all the rules successfully, one must first know them.

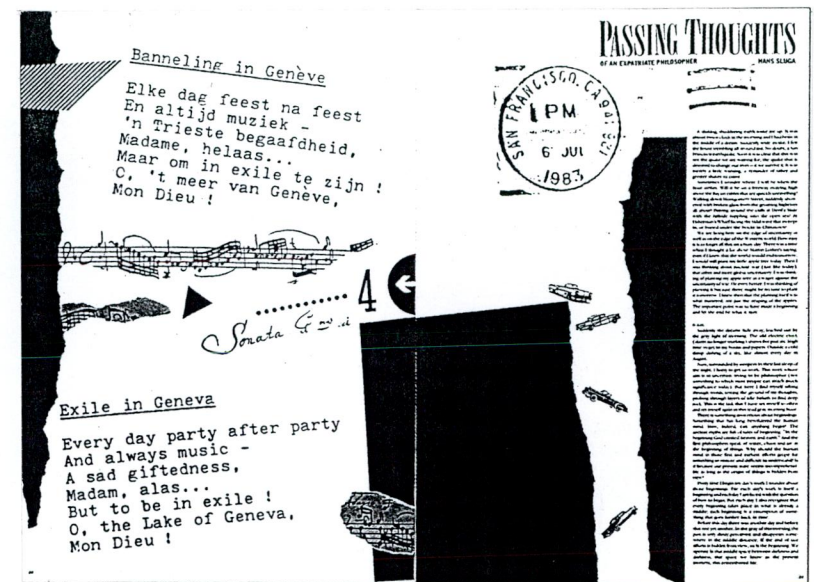*'I know there are areas within design where there should be*

Figure ,5 spread from Emigre # 1

no mistake about legibility at all, like highway sign systems - people have a split second to read them so you cannot put in any personality - But there are projects that could be done in very irrational and illegible ways without any problem.'

(Dooley, Michael. 1992, pg.55)

Vanderlans rejects the grid as being the one thing that stops a designer from being truly creative. He views the grid as some sort of cage within which the designer is forced to stay. He is therefore rejecting the mathematical and the rational in favour of the intuitive.

'I had been so brainwashed about designing according to a grid that I wanted Emigre to look a lot more spontaneous, my only grid was going to be the four crop marks.'

(Thrift, Julia, 1992 pg.8)

Vanderlans also rejects the dominance of typefaces such as **Helvetica** and **Futura** chosen for their neutrality, to communicate a neutral message. He instead prefers to adopt the use of highly individualistic typefaces such as Barry Deck's **Template Gothic** (figure opposite) and Licko's fonts are also used to reinforce this rejection of neutrality.

HELVETICA helvetica
ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVXWYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvxwyz

HELVETICA helvetica
ABCDEFGHIJKLM
NOPQRSTUVXWYZ
abcdefghijkl
mnopqrstuvxwyz.

TEMPLATE GOTHIC
ABCDEFGHIJKLM
NOPQRSTUVXWYZ
abcde
fghijkl
mnopqr
stuvxwyz.

Figure.6 Template Gothic V's Helvetica.

Vanderlans seems opposed to commercialism on a large scale because of it imposes constraints on creativity and because it takes a guess at what the audience can understand,

> 'One thing we have never done at Emigre, whether it's the magazine, the typefaces, or music, is to second guess what the audience would like or be able to comprehend'.
>
> (Thrift, Julia, 1992 pg.8)

Emigre Graphics is incredibly independent both in its attitude and in its funding. All the products that it advertises in the magazine are *Emigre Graphics* products. This means that all revenue generated from them is put back into the magazine or stays within the company. This does not compromise in any way their independence to larger more conservative publishers. Vanderlans is in charge of the design, typesetting and interviews in the magazine. Zuzana Licko is in charge of the font foundry, from production to distribution. It is little wonder that the magazine only gets published four times a year.

Indeed it was only recently that *Emigre Graphics* released a book charting these years in their own words. But, for the purpose of this thesis, I have chosen to overlook the contents of their book and instead concentrate on the magazine as my main resource.
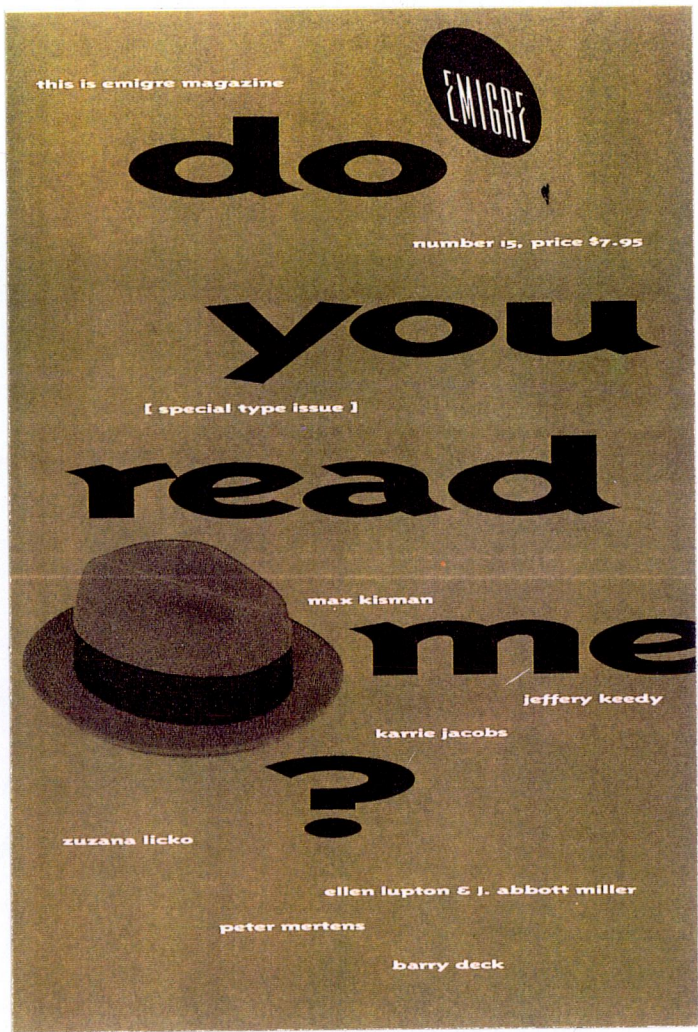
Figure.7 Emigre#15 cover .

CHAPTER 2

This chapter takes a closer look at the characteristics of Vanderlans' work that culminate in *Emigre* magazine. It also suggests a possible historic parallel in Piet Zwart.

Emigre magazine has now been in circulation for ten years. During this time Vanderlans has displayed a number of design traits or motifs in his work that make it unmistakable.

Throughout the ten years that Vanderlans has been designing *Emigre* he has used icons in his work which relate strongly to his background as an emigrant of Holland. Perhaps the one icon which reoccurs constantly is that of the hat (a fedora). This I have taken to be a visual analogy of the old saying 'wherever I lay my hat, thats my home.' He alludes constantly to his roots in Holland indirectly. There is a whole issue of *Emigre* devoted solely to designers who have emigrated to Holland from America, Issue no. 20, entitled Ex-Patriates and issue 25 is called made in Holland. When the first issues of *Emigre* appeared on the bookshelves, it had the subtitle *a magazine for exiles*. Vanderlans seems to be referring to himself as a designer in exile.

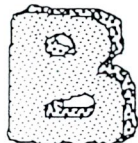Vanderlans also makes the connection between a foriegn language and experimental typography. That it is a language to be learned from experience. Vanderlans is an imigrant himself. The illustration opposite figure .7) is a good example of Vanderlans using the hat motif and posing the ever present question in *Emigre* 'do you read me ?'. Vanderlans also asks these questions again and again in issue 11. He encourages us to keep on reading as if to prove *Emigre graphics'* motto, that is 'familiarity creates legibility.' or 'people read best, what they read most'. He then seems to do all in his power to stretch the bounds of this legibility.
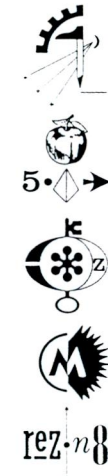
LAYOUT.

Vanderlans does not set up any grid when designing the magazine. He uses what he refers to as an organic grid, which is free to grow and form itself as he works. (Diane Burnes, 1992, pg.49). It is as a result of this that each page is unique. Vanderlans uses no set column width and sometimes includes three different widths on the same spread. Figure 8. (next page) shows a spread from *Emigre* no,11 , here is an extreme but not unique example of Vanderlans employing the use of four different column

abcdefghijk
lmnopqrstu
vwxyz12345
67890[]!?#
&+=:;"'',./ëé
üöäá

Figure 8. Emigre# 11 .pages 30-31.

"It is somewhat of a myth that computers save time and money. They save clients time and money, but they end up costing the designer more time and money. Mostly because you are pioneering or trying to figure out how to solve problems on the computer. And also, you have so many solutions to choose from, which is great, but very time-consuming. It all looks easy and you tell everybody you did it fast because you are too embarrassed to tell them how much time it really took you to do it." April Greiman at "Rethinking the Journey," Monterey, 1989

widths on the same spread. Even more extreme is that each column represents a different article in the magazine. Vanderlans explains that the notion of structure in design i.e the grid, came about when all the typesetting and design was done by hand. Because of the labour involved, a grid was set up to save time. He says,

'.........you could easily set up a grid on the computer too, but the thing is, on the computer you can design a book and draw a different size column for text on every page. And you can still do it in a matter of minutes.'
(Diane Burnes, 1992, pg.49)

Vanderlans always takes the road less travelled in design and expects the reader to follow him. He veiws the International Style or rational design as the easy option.

'We're interested in what people could like in terms of what they haven't seen, or heard yet. Which is a more difficult route to go, but it's more exciting to us'
(Dooley,Michael.1992,pg.55)

It was, and still is, the Macintosh that allows Vanderlans this freedom of construction. Vanderlans will often fill a page with so much text that it becomes overloaded. This is all part of his attempts to stretch the bounds of legibility. He leaves the reader no breathing space on the page and as a result creates a sort of immersion in the text. The book *Typography Now* by Rick Poynor, examines the new wave of typographic design that has emerged with the adoption of the Macintosh as a tool for design. Poynor identifies the ambiguity of Vanderlans' work and the work of many other designers as an attempt to invoke in the reader a more participatory responce.

'The aim is to promote multiple rather than fixed readings, to provoke the reader into becoming an active participant in the construction of the message.'
(Rick Poyner. 1991, pg.10)

Vanderlans takes the idea to the extreme in some cases and uses typefaces that are not standard alphabets, but codes of a sort. The example on the following page (figure. 9) is a spread from *Emigre* 18 entitled 'Across illegibility'. The article is a series of reprints of an extract from Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. These pages, nine in all, are an example of where Vanderlans' style becomes message. The pages are an exercise in textural manipulation and a

On this page and the nine following, the excerpt Hamlet Act 3, scene 3, from Shakespeare is transmitted by codings of the code The code (alphabet) derives, depending on the case, by permutations or by transmutations

King

O, my offence is rank, it smells to heaven;
It hath the primal eldest curse upon't,-
A brother's murder!-Pray can I not,
Though inclination be as sharp as will:
My stronger guilt defeats my strong intent;
And, like a man to double business bound,
I stand in pause where I shall first begin,
And both neglect. What if this cursed hand
Were thicker than itself with brother's blood,-
Is there not rain enough in the sweet heavens
To wash it white as snow? Whereto serves mercy
But to confront the visage of offence?
And what's in prayer but this twofold force,-
To be forestalled ere we come to fall,
Or pardon'd being down? Then I'll look up;
My fault is past. But, O, what form of prayer
Can serve my turn? Forgive me my foul murder!
That cannot be; since I am still possess'd
Of those effects for which I did the murder,-
My crown, mine own ambition, and my queen.
May one be pardon'd and retain the offence?
In the corrupted currents of this world
Offence's gilded hand may shove by justice;
And oft 'tis seen the wicked prize itself
Buys out the law.

Figure.9   Emigre# 18. spread.

deconstruction of the code of legibility.

TYPE

When Vanderlans was at the Royal Academy in the Hague he recalls only being allowed to use two typefaces, Universe and Baskerville. It was this rigid and strong grounding in the fundamentals of type that enabled him to produce experimental work of a high standard. Vanderlans seems to take all the rules and regulations concerning type, and use their opposites. For example, in many of the issues of *Emigre* he will only use one large column over the whole page. If we look at the illustration on the following page we can see that the rule stating that no more than 12 words in a line is completely thrown out the window. The same is true for other pages and of late, particularly in recent issues, Vanderlans has continued to run the text in page width lines that seem to have no end.

He also likes to contrast type sizes drastically on the same layout. This has the effect of always changing the scale of the page and the reader somehow feels as if (s)he is too near to the page one moment and too far away the next.

Vanderlans does this by varying greatly the size of type, from huge 72 point and then in the next column down to minute 8 point type. (figure.10) He ignores the traditional distinction made between headline size type and the size of type used for copy. In this same way he also uses typefaces that would be only considered traditionally for display purposes in the setting of large bodies of text.

Vanderlans uses type to set up an atmosphere on the page. Sometimes it is one of overload, as in figure .11 , a page from an article on Cranbrook Academy of Art, where Vanderlans has filled the page to capacity and even included the background noises in the studio, such as a dog barking or a baby crying. Figure.12. is a detail of the spread. Other spreads have an atmosphere of disquieting tension as in Figure .13 showing a spread from 1987. Here he has used Licko's early bitmapped fonts to provide a contrast with the large black frenzied looking roller marks and the haphazard layout.

Vanderlans creates pages and uses type according to his intuition. He does not consider the reader when working, instead he expects the reader to become involved enough to take the time to decipher the message. Vanderlans will

April Greiman Continued

that are wonderful and that I need. I'd like to find an economical way to make the paintbox be more **painterly** and maybe be more **ambiguous** in the final result. Sometimes, **accidentally,** this happens because I am new at it, but I don't feel like I'm really controlling that yet. I'm kind of missing that **painterly feeling that you can get on a Mac.** If you airbrush on the Mac, it's so rough that you always get these wonderful **gestures** out of things, because it is making decisions and approximations at every corner! With the graphic paintbox, the resolution is so high that it's all very accurate, there are no visible approximations. **Emigre**: Will the Macintosh contribute to a change in graphic design mostly in the area of production, or will it influence design aesthetics as well? **April**: Both! In principal, I would agree that the Mac saves us time and all that. But what I experience is rather than doing something quickly, we're **looking at more** possibilities. Instead of doing more work we are **seeing more** options. Now we spend **more time visualizing and seeing things,** and before the Mac, we spent more time doing things. You wouldn't look at twelve different sizes of a headline type, because it would involve setting the type and then statting it and you would just say, "Oh come on, I don't have to try this subtler difference." But with the Mac, once the information is stored, you can just look at seventy-two thousand variations. And then the accidents happen and you say, "Oh that's so much better, why don't I go that way?" And then you are off on a whole new idea. This pioneering, **where you don't have an aesthetic yet and you don't have tradition,** is both time-consuming and wonderful. **To feel lost is so great.** There are only a few areas in this very controlled industry that you can feel like that. **Emigre**: Where will these experimentations lead to? **April**: There are two ways that we are pushing this technology. One is by **imitating and speeding up normal processes** of different disciplines, such as production and typesetting. Here, the **technology is a slave** and is simulating what we already know. But I think that if we all keep going the way we are going and other people jump in, all desperate for **new textures/new languages,** then the other area in which it's going to advance is a **new design language.** Rather than get the language that's built-in to speak to you in English, you say, well, I know it can speak English, it does that very well, but there is also a new language. What do digital words really mean and say? There is a **natural language in that machine** and I am interested in finding out what that is, and where the boundaries are. **Emigre**: How come you haven't done any type design on the Macintosh? **April**: There just isn't enough time to do everything. I am such a fanatic about type, and I am so critical and such a perfectionist about it, and there are so many great typefaces that exist. It would take me a year to come up with anything decent and I just don't have the time. **Emigre**: Do you think that there will be an increase in gimmicks and copying due the Macintosh? **April**: Sure, but that happens with any new technology.

I don't worry too much about that. The Mac's so easy to use. It's going to be very scary. It'll be interesting to see what will happen in another three years or so. Kids know how to use this now and everybody will be **modeming** and using **electronic bulletin boards** and what not. So yes, there'll be a lot of mimicry and copying, but it will make the people with traditional design backgrounds and the people with the high-end equipment who know what they are doing push themselves further. For a while, communications may be really ugly and bad. There are going to be large cor-

Emigre: Who had the idea of acquiring Macintosh computers at Cranbrook? The students or the faculty?

Glenn: We were one of the original three design schools chosen for the Apple Design School Consortium. Apple generously donated both hardware and software to the Cranbrook Design Department and was very helpful in introducing us to this new phenomenon called the Macintosh. Hugh Dubberly from Apple came out for a few days to help set up the network and offered some valuable training seminars. Kathy and Mike McCoy (CoChairs, Design Department) were very enthusiastic about the possibilities the computer could offer. Many of my classmates had never used a computer before, so it represented not only a new tool to learn, but a new way of working.

Emigre: Were there specific classes taught on the Macintosh?

Glenn: Cranbrook does not teach any technical skills and the program has no formal instruction. For me, the Macs were a very timely arrival, they arrived the first day of my second year at Cranbrook. Although we had no specific technical training for the Mac, Kathy McCoy assigned design projects that involved using the computer, and just by using it, we quickly learned the technical aspects.

Emigre: What did the assignments involve?

Glenn: These projects were designed to explore the Macintosh as a design tool and to see if it would inspire our own design sensibilities in any new or different ways. My particular group did not have specific design assignments using the computer. However, the first-year graphic designers started the program using them. Projects were designed to incorporate many of the software programs, such as PageMaker and Illustrator. There was one particular typographic assignment that we all did where I set some type, then laser-scanned it and put it into a paint program, printed it out, statted it, ran it through the waxer and cut up part of it, xeroxed it, photographed it, laser-scanned it again, and basically ran it through all the technology available in the studio to see what would happen. I let the various technologies take over, and through this process, discovered some interesting formal qualities. We were offered complete freedom in these projects and we were never told we had to use the computer exclusively. Using the Mac at Cranbrook was a matter of choice combined with a lot of encouragement. The computer was available to all of us to use and explore in any way we wanted to. We had no technical instruction at all, but we learned how to use the Mac nevertheless. People who can design pick it up rather quickly. Although some of my classmates resisted it totally, other classmates took to it fairly soon and began to use it exclusively.

Emigre: What did the students who resisted it rebel against?

Glenn: I think the feeling was that the Macintosh could not do anything more than we could using traditional design tools.

Emigre: Do you feel you can do more with it than with traditional methods?

Glenn: The Macintosh is an analogue to our traditional design tools. It is a typesetter, drawing board and mayline, pencil and paint brush, sketch pad, and filing cabinet, but it is all located in one tiny electronic box. I must admit I have become completely addicted to using it. The Macintosh is not much different from the design tools we traditionally use, despite its seemingly progressive capabilities. However, it does allow us firsthand control and the opportunity for endless changes and experimentation.

Emigre: I have seen you use it in a very experimental way. When it comes to type, for instance you have created new letterforms that are more illustration than type. Will you continue these experiments?

Glenn: We have all seen the value of the Mac as a production tool and how easy it is to typeset, construct and output final pages, but there are a lot of undiscovered possibilities the computer suggests. At Cranbrook, Kathy McCoy really pushed us to explore "the other side" of the computer. I became very interested in developing typography as image, which came out of exploring this "other side." At Cranbrook, we tried to push the computer in different ways by using it unconventionally to

Glenn Suokko. Back cover Emigre 10

improve
identity
characteristic
specific person
destroy prevent
the temperament

Figure.10. Emigre#11, spread pg.8+9

of and took pride in their heritage and their uniqueness. The emphasis up to then had been to more or less become as American as possible and to be part of the mass society. Lately we've moved into an era of more cultural fragmentation and ethnic celebration. Marketing has changed from mass marketing to targeted marketing, and design should also be tied more to people's specific values. **Emigre:** When your work becomes this personal and when it celebrates local culture and includes its vernacular, how do your students deal with that when, for instance, they go and work in Holland, which they do a lot? How do they deal with these ideas of the vernacular and the intricacies of wordplay in the Dutch language? Does that not present a problem?

<u>Kathy:</u> That should really be answered by someone who has worked abroad but unfortunately no one here has. Isn't it a little strange to see Robert Nakata's postage stamp for the Dutch Railroad? It's in Dutch. So is he a cultural chameleon? In a way, isn't that an aspect of what a designer should be? You have to be a chameleon to shape your message to the audience so that you can resonate with that audience. **Emigre:** Where does Cranbrook's interest in Dutch design stem from? **Kathy:** I discovered Dutch design for myself around 1982. We went to Holland and saw some of the work and we recognized there were concerns and enthusiasms similar to ours'. Even if you can't read the words, there is a very visual character in their work that is uniquely Dutch. There's a lot of humor and irreverence, and poking holes in pretension. What I really admired about Dutch design and why I brought some back to show the students that first trip (and then I brought a whole bunch back after my sabbatical and it turned into an exhibition), was how Dutch it was. It was authentic. There was a straight line progression between early Modernism, De Stijl and Piet Zwart. You can trace the lineage all the way through the decades, and Piet Zwart was still lecturing at GVN (Dutch Graphic Designers Association) meetings in the middle seventies, telling them about what they were doing wrong, and what design should be. The designers we met, we noticed, were looking to their history and were including early modern forms and references out of a direct cultural memory. And I felt that a lot of this late Modern or Post-Modern work was somewhat analogous to what was happening in the US with New Wave. But the Dutch were doing it for authentic cultural reasons, whereas we were doing it as if we were mining history. We'd say "Isn't that vernacular nifty," a banquet of stuff ready to be appropriated. That's why I was interested in Dutch design. Maybe we could look at it as a role model. Maybe we could see what operations they were carrying on, and we could find what might be the equivalent for us that would achieve the same authenticity. I could ask myself, I'm from Detroit, now how do I reflect my culture here in Detroit? How do I reflect my history? What is my history? Not to imitate Dutch design, but to find a parallel.

"There are social as well as political questions inherent in the new Cranbrook projects. In the supposedly classless United States, what are these designers doing raiding the manual worker's vernacular? When Paul Montgomery designs a portable microwave oven that resembles and even serves as an analogue to the workman's lunchbox, or when Lisa Krohn designs a personal computer that looks and unpacks like a tool kit, they are trying to link the labor-intensive culture of the manual era to that of the electronic. There is social awareness, a certain wit and utility here, but there are also risks in adopting vernacular motifs. It runs the risk of patronizing workers in old patterns of labor and it might also patronize the more sensitive users of the new equipment, plucking at their guilty consciences. After a theirs, in a roundabout way, are the jobs that have supplanted the old manual ones." Hugh Aldersey-Williams, Cranbrook Design: The New Discourse

<u>Emigre:</u> What do you think about Hugh Aldersey's concerns regarding the use of vernacular elements when he raises the question "what are these designers doing raiding the manual worker's vernacular?" He mentions that there is a social and political risk involved, that it might patronize the manual laborer. **Kathy:** The piece that Hugh was referring to specifically was Paul Montgomery's portable microwave oven. The design makes a reference to a working man's lunch box. I don't agree with Hugh's point. Many of us had lunchboxes like these. I don't really see that it's not part of our culture. Hugh is from a more class-conscious society, and may not realize that America is much more a mass society where all of us share the working man tradition. Although Hugh wasn't really talking about graphic design, he could have very well been talking about Scott Zukowski's "Loaf" poster too, because he used similar working man's images. Scott's poster is about breadwinning and the working man. It is a theme that runs through his work a lot. That's his family background, so he wasn't superimposing an ethic; it's his ethic. **Emigre:** But the audience doesn't know that about Scott Zukowski... <u>Scott Makela:</u> Well, then you should ask yourself, who is more important, the designer or the audience? Sometimes it is fun to give yourself more pleasure and let the audience take what it can. Why

---

lity of this 'universal design'." But most of

s, is work that is played out in very ideologi

!! Baby cries !!

orate identities, which is really where, in yo

vs posters for the most part; there is not on

of the book there are several logotypes. But yes, v

ranbrook after doing very systematic, program-driv

age to the audience so that you can resonate with

brook's interest in Dutch design stem from?

! Loud dog bar

! Loud doc

We went to Holland and saw some of the work an

! Loud dog bark !

Even if you can't read the words, there is a very vi

mor and irreverence, and poking holes in pretensio

back to show the students that first trip (and the

Figure.11 Emigre#19. Cranbrook atricle.   Figure.12 Detail of Figure 11
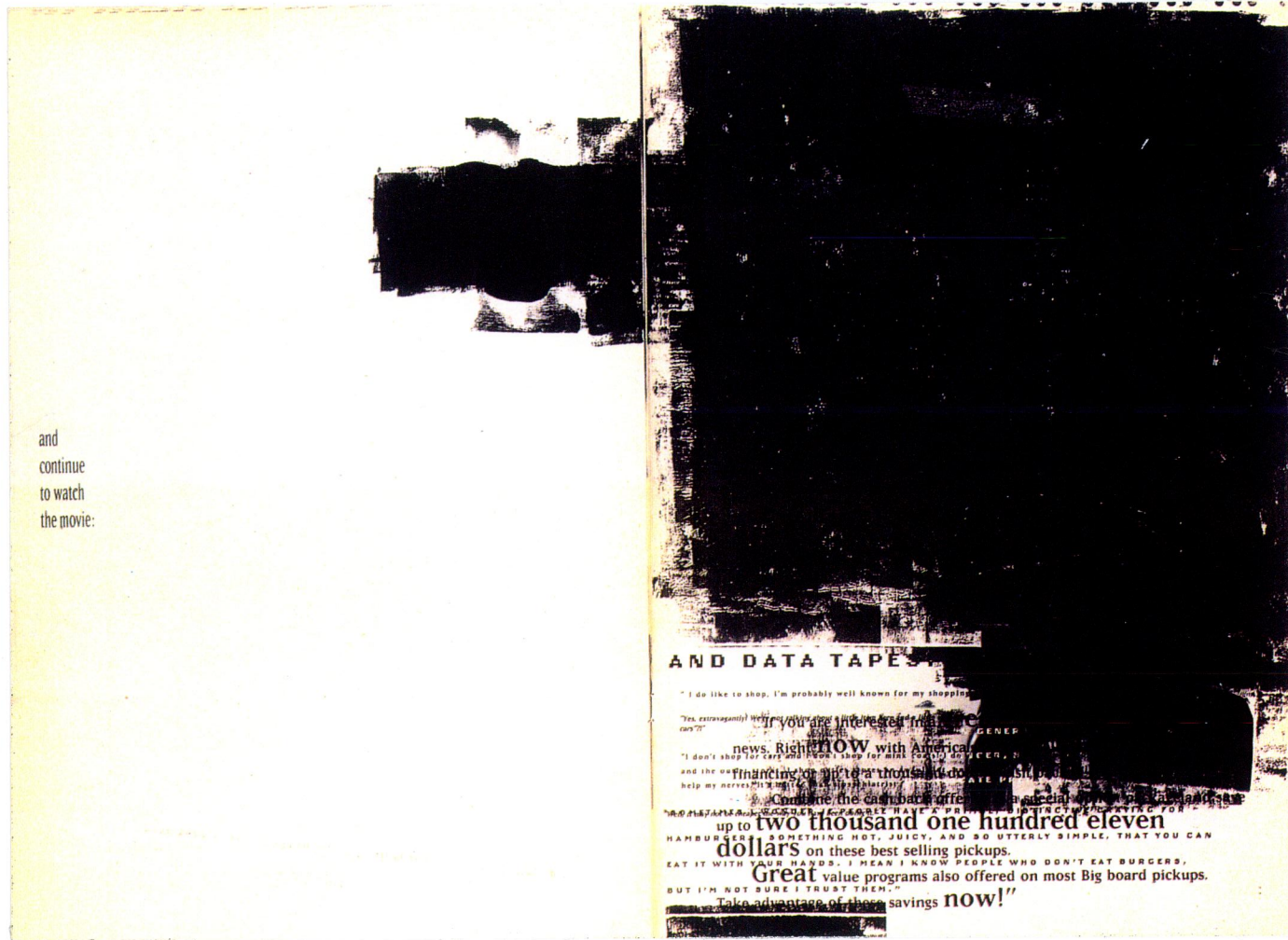
and
continue
to watch
the movie:

AND DATA TAPES

" I do like to shop, I'm probably well known for my shopping

"Yes, extravagantly" well... cars"? If you are interested in the GENER news. Right now with American car "I don't shop for cars and I won't shop for mink too. I don't. financing on after a thousand dollars help my nerves. it's in... Combine the cash-back offer special up to two thousand one hundred eleven dollars on these best selling pickups. HAMBURGER, SOMETHING HOT, JUICY, AND SO UTTERLY SIMPLE, THAT YOU CAN EAT IT WITH YOUR HANDS. I MEAN I KNOW PEOPLE WHO DON'T EAT BURGERS, Great value programs also offered on most Big board pickups. BUT I'M NOT SURE I TRUST THEM." Take advantage of these savings now!"

Figure.13. Emigre#8 ,1987. spread.

readily admit that all the work he does is done for himself and if someone likes it, then he has succeeded.

'The one thing Zuzana and I have always done with all our work is to try and please ourselves, first and foremost. And if poeple out there are going to like it then that's really great. But we never believed in the idea of marketing, never believed if we do **this** combined with **that** then **those** people will like it. Marketing only looks at what people already like. Well, we know that. It's boring. We're interested in what people **could** like in terms of what they haven't seen, or heard yet. Which is a more difficult route to go, but it's more exciting to us'

(Dooley, Michael. 1992, pg.55)

Vanderlans stands by his philosophy that people read best what they read most. He says,

'If people read 'ugly' against the rules typography every day, they will eventually get used to it and be able to read it without any problems. It's just a matter of giving it to them again and again.

(Dooley, Michael. 1992, pg.49)

THE MAGAZINE

Emigre's covers are predominantly two colour or even monochrome, and the spreads are always in monochrome. The fact that Vanderlans uses low budget techniques serves to give *Emigre* a different look to nearly every other contemporary magazine. I feel though that this only adds to the harmony of cover and contents. *Emigre* has more in common with the low budget fanzines and college 'rag mags' produced by people with little or no design training than it does with contemporary glossy publications. Vanderlans is a stern believer in low budget productions and because of this is continually experimenting with new techniques of over-printing.(Figure 14+15)

The magazine often prints articles of an inflammatory nature, such as 'Is best really better' by the design duo of Eric Van Blokland and Just Van Rossum (also Dutch). The article suggests that there could be viruses made to change and randomise the behaviour of fonts such as Helvetica, to produce something far more interesting. It goes on to
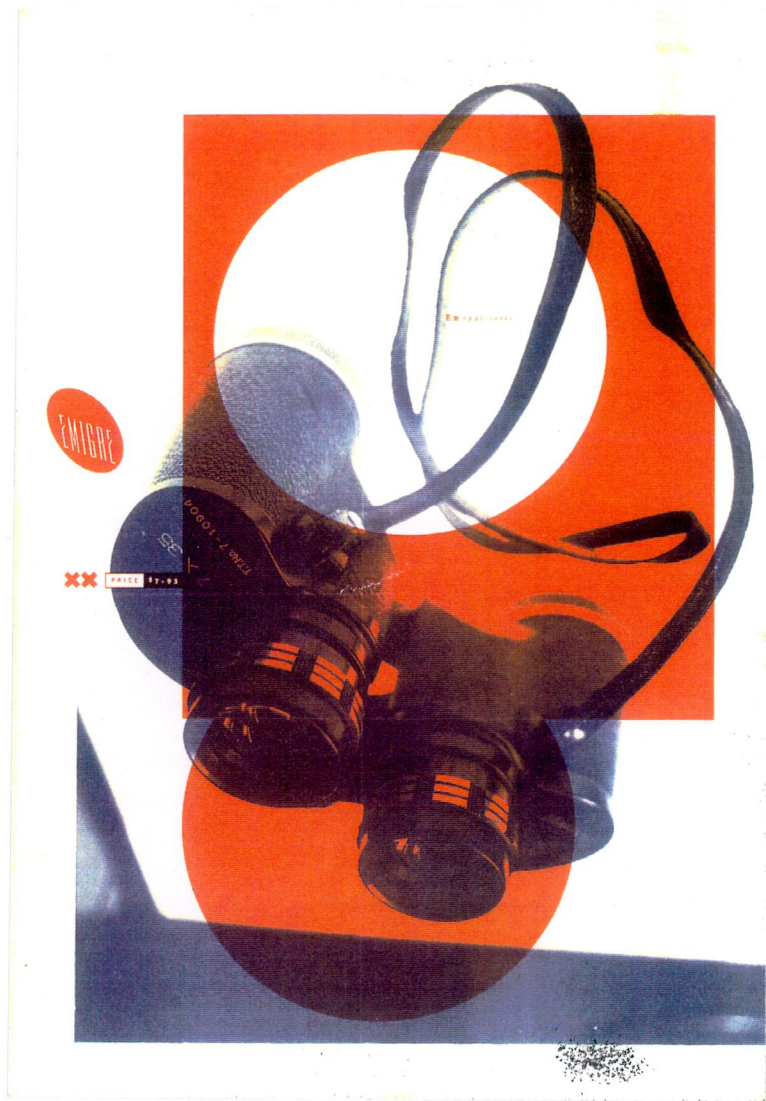
Figure.14, Emigre#20 cover.
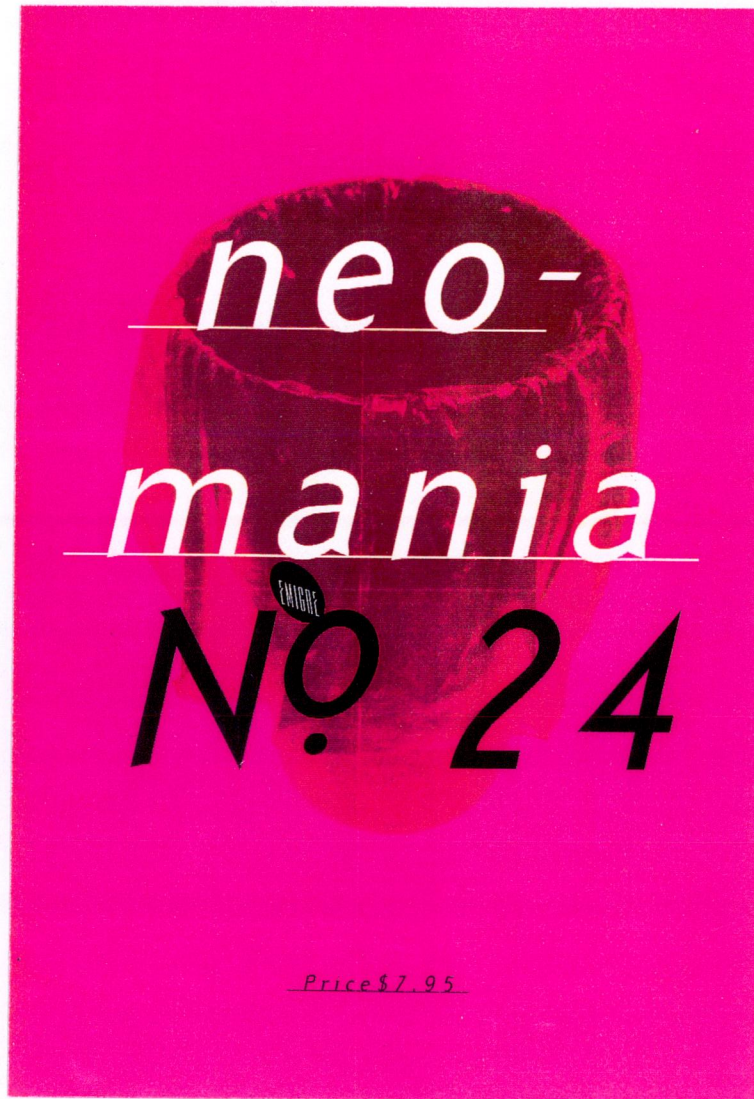
Figure.15, Emigre#24 cover.

deconstruct the whole idea of uniformity in modernist design and suggest that even corporate identities could change slightly with random technology. Their typeface Boewolf (opp) is an example of random technology in practice. It changes with each printing and the outlines constantly shift around, resulting in a broken or shattered look.

Emigre also publishes the work of Edward Fella on a regular basis, a deconstructivist typographer who stretches and cuts type into pieces, twirling and condensing letterforms into a kind of typographic putty (figure 17)
Vanderlans sometimes turns the whole design of the magazine over to a guest designer or group of designers. Issue,21 entitled new faces is completely designed and written by students from the Californian Institute of the Arts. Isue 25 is completely designed and written by a group of Dutch Designers and was done in Holland and then sent to Vanderlans in California. Vanderlans defends the articles by saying,

'I know what we're doing is not always considered proper according to the mainstream. But it's not our intention to be provocative only. We really hope to contribute to the way people look at graphic design. We are interested in

INTRODUCTION

ERIK VAN BLOKLAND & JUST VAN ROSSUM

Erik van Blokland and Just van Rossum both studied graphic and typographic design at the Koninklijke Akademie van Beeldende Kunsten in The Hague from 1985 to 1989. Erik van Blokland then worked at MetaDesign in Berlin, and currently works as a freelance graphic designer in The Hague. Just van Rossum worked for a short period at Monotype in England and then at MetaDesign in Berlin.
Together these two young Dutch designers developed "random technology" which is explained and shown on the following two pages. Currently they are collaborating on a variety of projects under their group name LetTerRor.

Is best really better?

Beowolf23
Beowolf22
Beowolf21

Figure.16,Eric Van Blokland and Just Van Rossum. Beowolf Typeface.

Figure 17. Edward Fella, Mailer for Detroit Gallery
1987

people who have something very intelligent to say, who are very sincere, and who are really passionate about their work. And it just so happens that oftentimes people some consider what we publish to be provocative or vulgar or obnoxious or whatever. But that is not why we go to these people. That is not why we show their work.'

<div align="right">(Dooley, Michael. 1992, pg. 49)</div>

HISTORIC PARALLEL.

When we look for comparisons to Vanderlans and *Emigre*, historically, we do not need to look very far. Indeed it was in the Hague of the late 1920's, where Vanderlans was later to study. **Piet Zwart** and a handful of other designers, namely Cesar Domela and Paul Schuitema were applying a new typographic and photographic style to their work. They were in conflict with the creative climate of their time. Which had in their opinion, become stagnant and over decorative. (fig. 18) The main interest of these decorative deigners was the production of fine books. Zwart and his colleagues' Marxist political influences meant that they held in contempt the eletist and restrictive application of typography which was confined to books. Decorative

appendages to type such as large ornamental drop-caps were an unnecessary luxury and therefore not for the prolitariet.

Zwart and his counterparts set about forming a new style that no longer held up typography as a 'holy' entity and moved away from an elitist standpoint. They would widen thier scope to include all material for print and not just books. Zwarts designs would be for the people.

Socialism and a striving for a just distribution of materials and spiritual goods led in the Netherlands to a wish for communal art beautiful design available to all even in graphic design.

(Kees Broos,Paul Hefting.1993 p.g II)

The work that Zwart produced in this climate of socialist values is today , ironically, very similar to Vanderlans' work in *Emigre*. Zwart's use of negative space is even by today's standards extremely refined and crafted.

The examples I refer to are the catalogues he produced for the Delft Cable Company from 1929-33 and for The PTT (the Dutch Post and Telecom). Figure 19.
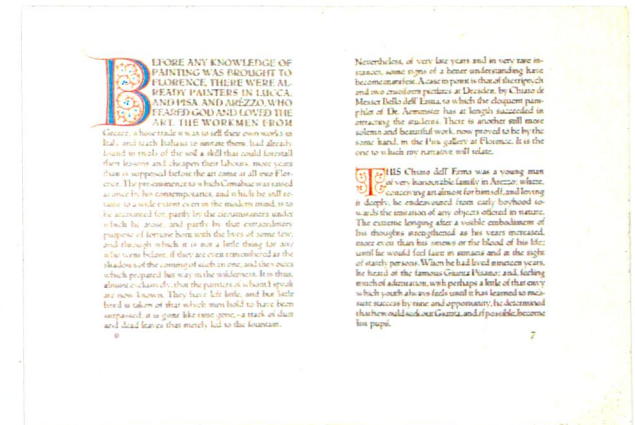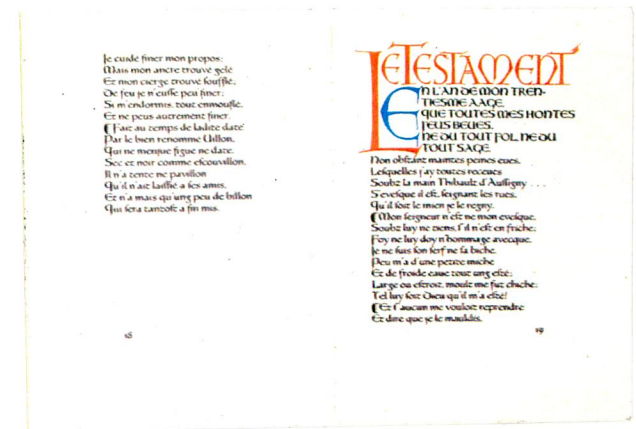
Figure 18. S,H De Roos, Book designs. 1929.

The use of photography in graphic design was something of a new phenomenon, the technology was there and could not be ignored. And as German, Jan Tschichold had prophesised in 'Die Neue Typographie' a few years earlier, photography became a strong element in this new aesthetic. Zwarts use of typography was something new also and had a slight Da-Daist flavour to it. One extremely large character in a lay-out would occupy a dominant position on the page and all other text would be used to create a dynamic composition in relation to it. In 1931 Piet Zwart said,

'The new typography is elementary, it negates a precon-ceived formal design layout, it uses design according to function. it designs a black and white page in such a way that the stresses in the text are expressed, explicitly or in a visual form'.

(Kees Broos, Paul Hefting. 1993 p.g 11)

These parallels that can be drawn between *Emigre* and early Dutch design because the climates in which they worked were in their eyes in need of change and extra stimulation. This stimulus was brought about, in both cases, by newly available technologies. In Zwart's case, the ability to repro-
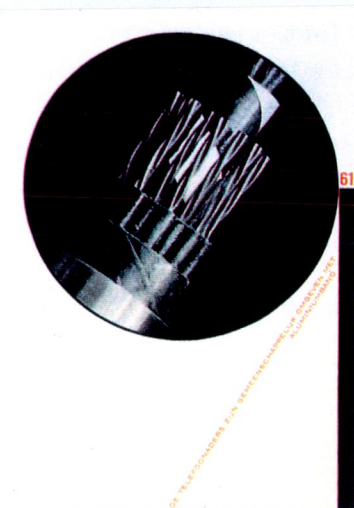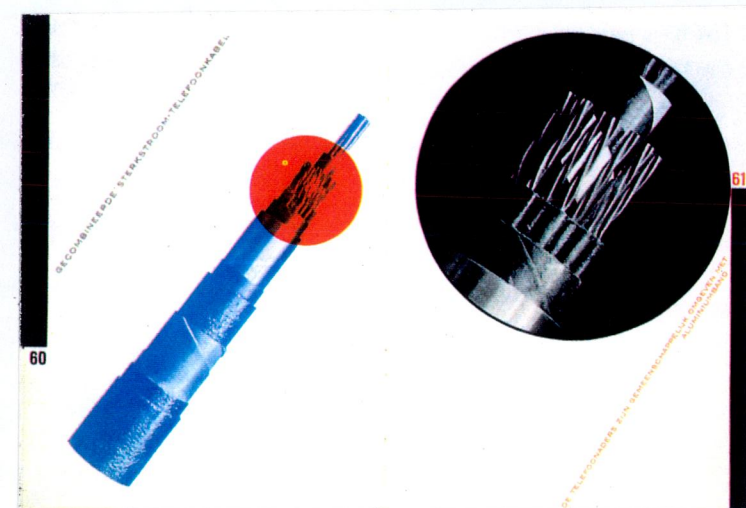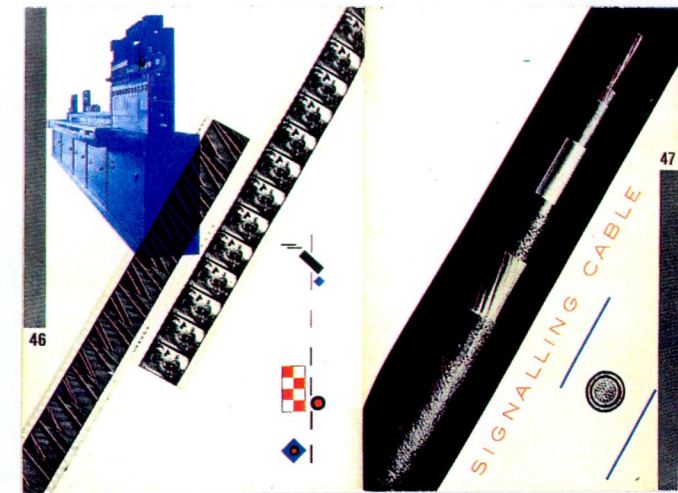
Figure 19. Piet Zwart, Delft Cable Company Brochure 1929-33

duce photography in print was the major factor in the developement of the new aesthetic. Photography could communicate their message to the proliteriat in a much more effective way.

Zwart and his fellow designers referred to themselves as the Primitives of the New Technical Era, because they felt that they were exploring new pathways in design and forming a new aesthetic that they alone had the power to shape and form as it grew. Vanderlans was similar in this respect as the magazine was one of the first to employ the Macintosh in its design process. Vanderlans and Licko were sailing in uncharted waters and so were primitives in this new area.

In *Emigre's* case it was the introduction of the Apple Macintosh that enbled Vanderlans and Licko to develop a new and exciting form of expression. Vandrlans and Licko were in the position to create a vernacular for the computer design age.

' Computer technology has advanced the state of graphic
art by such a quantam leap into the future that it has
bought the designer back to the most primitive of graphic

ideas and methods. It is no wonder that our first computer
art resembled that of niave cave paintings! This return to
our primeval ideas allows us to reconsider the basic assump-
tions made in the creative design process......... we are faced
with evaluating the basic rules of design that we formerly
took for granted.'

(Lapuz, Ronald. 1993, pg.24)

It was the Macintosh that gave a distinct flavour to the earlier issues of *Emigre*. Vanderlans turned the coarse quality of the early Macintosh output into a feature of the magazine. He describes these coarse digital textures as hav-ing as much quality of that of oil paint. His wife and part-ner Zuzana Licko also used the Macintosh's early coarseness of resolution to produce a range of typefaces that compli-mented the bitmapped imagery.

' Creating a graphic language with today's tools will mean
forgetting the styles of archaic technologies'

(Lapuz, Ronald. 1993, pg.22)

Emperor Eight

Emperor Eight

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V X W Y Z

a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o p q r s t u v x w y z

Emperor 15

Emperor 15

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V X W Y Z

a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o p q r s t u v x w y z

english

Figure 20. Emperor 8 and 15,
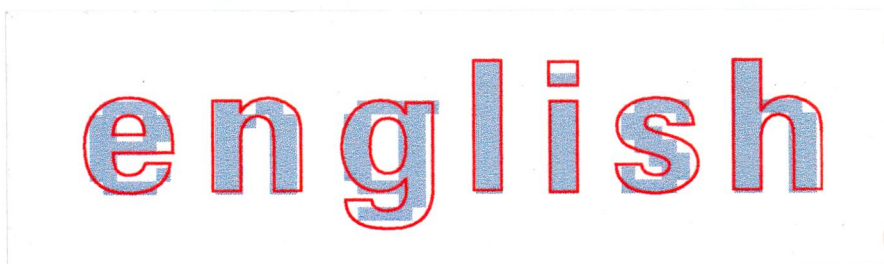
Figure 21. Emperor 8 and Universe (red outline)

CHAPTER 3

This chapter takes a look at a selection Zuzana Licko's typefaces. Charting their history and defining her intentions.

Just as there are many different accents in the spoken word, there are an abundance of typefaces. The two can be taken to mean the same thing, each typeface having its own subtle character and particular tone of voice.

Zuzana Licko has designed more than fifteen fonts and their families since 1985. Licko became interested in type design only after the introduction of the Macintosh into the design of Emigre and soon became involved with the problems associated with digital type, The first obstacle on her road was the fact that at that time the computer technology associated with font design and output was still in it's infancy therefore producing a slightly less than pleasing result if used to mimic the more traditional and acceptable typefaces at the time. The problem was that the output was only at a very low resolution, resulting in a breakup of letterforms sometimes beyond recognition. Serifs were

hacked flat and curvatures were stepped and broken. The solution was to design a typeface that worked with this resolution and not to use old faces that worked against it She started designing fonts to complement the machinery.

She under took the job as a full time occupation within *Emigre Graphics*. Licko's justification for these fonts was the fact that no typeface is inherently legible and therefore it is only through the process of reading that the codified marks become legible. She underlines the fact historically, by pointing out that in the 15th century, the now illegible, Blackletter script was commonly in use and when typefaces such as Baskerville were introduced in 1775 people were outraged at these monstrosities. Today Baskerville is considered one of the most legible of typefaces used extensively in hardback books and other long publications. (Rick Poyner. 1991, pg.10)

The fonts that Licko designed were designed out of necessity and a fascination with the newly available computer technology. The first was Emperor Eight (opp.), so called because it was eight pixels high. Emperor Fifteen (opp.) soon followed as did Emigre Eight and Emigre Fourteen. (next page)

'When nobody else is able to make something work I get inspired to find out what I might do with it . I heard everybody say how bad digital type looked and how it was impossible to make it look any better. This really inspired me .... I saw there was something unexplored and interesting there and I wanted to try my hand at it . Thats when I got into designing my first low resolution type.

(Labuz, Ronald 1993, pg.193.)

These first low resolution fonts are constructed from square pixels and have no smooth diagonals. Nevertheless when they are set in a small point size these attributes almost dissappear and the faces take on a distinct personality of thier own. Even at larger sizes the coarseness of their construction serves as a refreshment to the sometimes over smooth feel of faces such as Helvetica or Times.

Nearly ten years after thier conception these low resolution faces are still available as they continue to challenge the visual perfection of many fonts in circulation.
The application of computer technology to type design means that anyone can design a typeface and personality has become a major factor in this new type utopia.
The three typefaces that Licko designed using low resolution

technology are all quite different in appearance. Emigre 8 and 10 resemble sans serif typefaces such as Universe because of their use of a small x-height figure no.? compared to the cap-heights, and their rather square appearance. No serifs are apparent in the first two, on the other hand Emigre 14 and Emigre 15 resemble more traditional structures. Emigre 14 is a condensed serif face with a long stem and small ascenders and descenders, the addition of an extra square at the top of the ascenders and descenders serves to soften the low res. corners, just as Roman stone masons added serifs to the letterforms they carved.
Emigre 14 is constructed with more pixels than the other low resolution fonts and therefore has a softer appearance. This font resembles one of Licko's later fonts **Matrix** very closely. The font illustrates well how with careful planning and consideration of usage, dot matrix can produce a quality that may not rival but is certainly a viable alternative to photosetting.

The other series of fonts are called Emperor, Oakland and Universal. Emperor is a condensed sans serif face and again has a large x-height. The other faces in the Emperor family have extremely elongated character heights and again closely resembles another one of her later fonts **Modula.**

Emigre Eight

Emigre Eight

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U

V X W Y Z

a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o p q r s t u

v x w y z .

Emigre 14

Emigre 14

A B C D E

F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U

V X W Y Z

a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o p q r s t u

v x w y z .

Figure 22. Emigre 8 and 14.

The Universal series is not disimilar to the Emperor but has a flatter and wider appearance and a smaller x-height. This font was the starting point for Licko's **Citizen** font. (illustr. next page)

The **citizen** face (pg.36) comes in two weights and has a rectangular feel to it. At a large point size it also becomes apparent that the font is drawn with lines and possesses no curves, it also has a strange 'hairy' edge to the corners. Citizen was designed when the transition between low and high resolution output was still taking place, so possesses the characteristics of an intermediate solution. It is really only a display or headline face, as it's squareness does not lend it self easily to a text or body copy situation. As with most of Licko's early fonts the short ascenders and descenders create a cluttered and crammed appearance on the page, and the all to regular character widths resemble a typewriter where all the characters are required technically to have similar widths for reasons of spacing. But as with all of her low resolution fonts Licko manages to create an appearance of technological involvememt in the construction of the letterforms without it becoming tasteless and affected. When we see the designs that were available through **Letraset** at the time that had a techological flavour to

Citizen

A B C D E
F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U
V X W Y Z

a b c d e
f g h i j k l m n o p q r s t u
v x w y z

C

Figure 23. Citizen typeface.

them for example the **Data** fig. 24. **Synchro**, L.C.D or **Oxford** fonts, we can see an honesty in Licko's work that may not have been apparent before. The fonts created by **Letraset** tend to be rather crude conceptually and in construction. Probably the most classical looking font in the Emigre type range is **Matrix**. Figure 25. The font has an extended family, comprising of a Book , Regular, Bold, Small Caps, a script version , bold and inline and in extra condensed tall, wide and narrow variants. The extent to which Licko has elaborated on the one theme is reminiscent of the more traditional faces like Garamond, with it's huge family. The font itself is extremely refined in its construction and is based as far as I can see on the bitmapped font Emigre fourteen. It's serifs are quite unmistakable as they are wedge shaped. This form of serif originated in 1884, after the Egyptian forms of type. It is traditionally refered to as a Latin. Lickos inclusion of non-alligning numerals with the face is surprising as these seem to have been abandoned as old fashioned by many designers up to that point.

Matrix is an extremely pleasing face to read and rivals any of the older and more established faces. It has enjoyed great usage by Vanderlans in the magazine and I myself have seen it used extensively in a number of publications. The font resembles very closely a font which

ORSTUVWXYZ

ORSTU

Figure 24. Characters from Letraset's Data typeface.

Stevenson Blake designed, nearly a hundred years prior (1884-1890). Matrix will undoubtedly go on to become a classic, and may even one day be considered dead or stagnant by some. Out of the many faces designed by Licko in the last decade **Matrix** is the only one which Vanderlans still uses. Other fonts in the Emigre range also find their origins in the early bitmaps. **Senator**, figure 30. In Thin, Demi and Ultra, is a hybrid of **Emigre 14** and **Oakland 15**. The face has a heavily stressed diagonal in the lowercase. Like most of Licko's designs the descenders are very short indeed. Senator suffers because Licko has sacrificed the letterforms in order to achieve a uniform appearance throughout. The other face in the range that has it's origins in early bitmaps is **Modula**, (illustr. pg .37) an extremely tall face that comes in sans serif and serif. Modula suffers less from over design because it is simpler in construction. The stroke widths are uniform throughout the faces, lending **Modula** a more complete look. But it still suffers from an over elongation which tends to make it appear top heavy or unstable on the page. The serif version has more stability to it, but like **Senator** it suffers from an over application of it's design quirk, an extreme rounding of the bowls. (the curves of the letters)

Licko has also designed a number of pure display faces, one

Matrix

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz

X

articulated
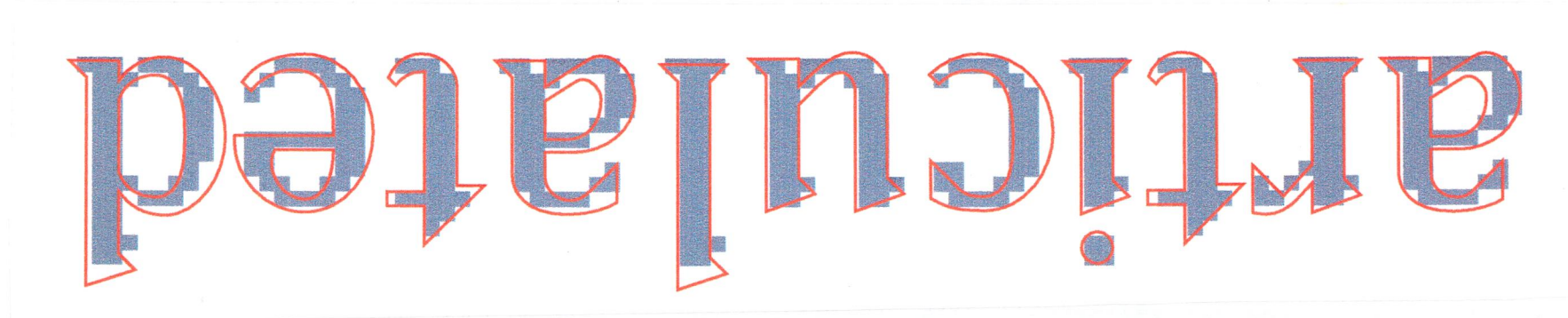
Figure 26. comparison Emigre 14 and Matrix, (red outline)
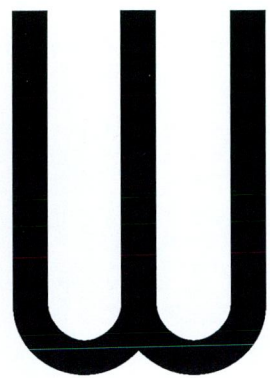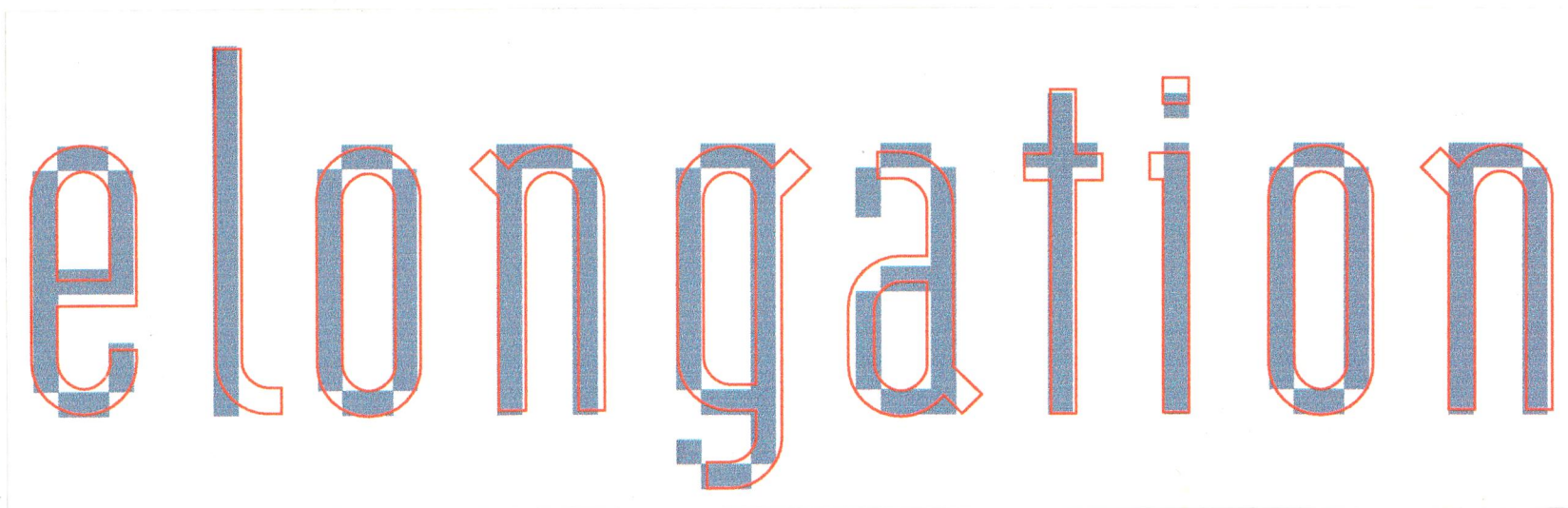
Figure 27. Modula.

MODULA

W

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVXWYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvxwyz

elongation

Comparison between Modula (red outline) and Emperor 15

of which is **Oblong,** it is constructed around a strict grid and are very square in appearance. **Oblong** is a font that bears a striking resemblance to a face designed by Theo Van Doesburg in 1919. The Van Doesberg font is designed with a grid of 25 equal squares and was done as a series of new typefaces (The Architype Series) using geometry and the ideals of the new-found modernist aesthetic. Van Doesburg was one of the founder members of **De Stijl.** Another face designed in this series (Architype Renner) went on to become the beginnings of the famous **Futura** typeface. Oblong is an ode to these designers, who were in their time the challengers of the traditional elitist aesthetic.

Licko's contribution to modern typographic design was one of example. She showed designers it was possible to create typefaces on the Macintosh, and that the craft was not the sole territory of the large corporate foundries. Before the age of digitally constructed fonts, a person who was interesred in designing a typeface would be only able to look at the result as drawings and sketches. But with the new technology avenues opened up which meant that same person could now construct their letters in the computer and then create a typeface that they could type with in any documents they pleased. Licko was the original renegade who

Oblong

ABCDE

FGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUXWYZ

abcdeghijklmnopqrstu
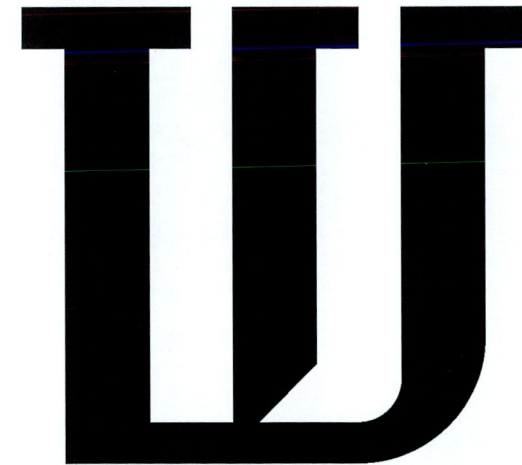
vxwyz

figure 29. Theo Van Doesberg's font 1919

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tried to produce an alternative to the existing range of fonts available and succeeded using the Macintosh as a tool. She paved the way for and encouraged others to do the same. Indeed up until recently Emigre was asking readers if they had designed a font to send it to them. Emigre now has the designs of more than five different type designers in their library and the number is growing all the time. Barry Deck, Edward Fella, Miles Newlyn, Jonathan Barnbrook are to name but a few.

Senator.

ABCDE

FGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVXWYZ

abcdeghijklmnopqrstuvxwyz

W

Figure 30. Senator,

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CONCLUSIONS

The work of Vanderlans was described to me, by a friend, as someone showing off to their peers as some part of in-joke. The friend thought it somehow unethical for a designer to be producing work that did not communicate to the layman in any way except to confuse and annoy. Others thought it extremely clever and seemed refreshed by its approach to typography. They saw type as something concrete and not in the background , acting as a vehicle for content, but where type actually becomes the content.

But why should a designer be tied by existing rules and regulations of his profession ? Can he or she not cross the boundaries once in a while and produce work that is on a purely abstract level ?. Why the misconception that design must always communicate on a pure realist plane, while other forms of expression such as painting or sculpture can cross freely between abstraction and realism?.

Vanderlans is in the unique position, as a designer to do whatever he wants. *Emigre* magazine is his playground, where he is the judge and the jury.

There is perhaps a slight amount of jealousy on the part of other designers when criticising Vanderlans's work. For example Massimo Vignelli described Vanderlans' work as a kind of *freaking out* and an *aberration of culture* in a recent debate published in *Print* magazine.

Vignelli is a well known and respected member of the design community, he is also an exponent of the International Style. Vignelli is designing for the public at large and the other, Vanderlans, is designing primarily for himself and other designers. *Emigre* is undoubtedly a magazine solely for graphic designers. *Emigre* is a designers' 'holiday', if you like, away from a client- based relationship to one where anything can happen and invariably does. It is design for design's sake. The other major fact about Vanderlans and Licko's work is that they were attempting to forge a new way of looking at design using the Macintosh as their tool.

Aesthetically, their work is a rejection of of the elegance and restrained clarity of the International Style.
To criticize the work of Vanderlans and Licko for what it does not hope to be, for not meeting modernist standards of clarity, is a fundementally flawed and critically unfair approach. (Lapuz, Ronald. 1993, pg.25)

In the previous chapters I have attempted to discuss the means by which *Emigre* attempted to break and ignore boundaries in the world of design. The designs which Vanderlans produces for the magazine using Licko's fonts indeed set a new standard in the design world at the time. Things have moved on since the days of birthing a new aesthetic, but the validity of the work is nonetheless intact. Nowadays there is not as much of a need to agitate and fight against a tradition because the establishment seems to have woken up to the power of highly personalised design work and is slowly coming to the conclusion that variety is the spice of life.

The arguments that Massimo Vigneilli has had with *Emigre* seem to have lost their foundations as more designers in the mainstream are producing work that is subjective rather than objective. It may just be that the designers that always produced this kind of work are being picked up and carried along in the mainstream. Vigneilli's worst nightmare has come true with the ideals embodied in *Emigre* being picked up by the mainstream of the design community. These ideals therefore have become permanently entwined in contemporary culture and so cannot be seen anymore to be an aboration of that culture.

figure 31, recent Levis campaign Tango design Nov 93

The poster on the opposite page is an illustration of the way that mainstream designers and advertyising agencies are using an aesthetic borrowed directly from the pages of *Emigre*. If a corporate giant like Levi's is producing advertisements of this nature, it is not a sign of *Emigre's* influence on a generation of designers ?

But what does this mean for the future ?
Stretching back through history there has always been a process of reaction and acceptance going on, the underground's reaction to their contemporaries and the battle of aesthetics on the two sides.

William Morris and his reaction to the industrialisation that he saw about him and Piet Zwart and his primitives are all examples of this process in action. The wheels of taste will always turn, fueled by this process of reaction and acceptance and subsequent rejection. This process will continue undoubtedly forever or as long as design exists. But what will happen now that the underground has come to the surface in many areas of design ? Does this mean that the traditionalists will swap places and become the underground or will there be a resurrection of the old methods of produc-

tion, hand rendering of type and traditional paste-up ? There could well be a total rejection of the computer in design in the next century, but this one feels could only happen in an underground situation.

The almost decadent manipulation of typeforms that exist today could envoke a reaction and a return to a kind of Bauhaus revival of pure objective and functional typefaces. (such as Futura or Helvetica). The theories of Jan Tschichold may once again come full circle and the designer may only feel that (s)he only needs one or two typefaces. A quote from Massimo Vigneilli appears on the front cover of *Emigre* 18, which states,

> *'In the new computer age, the proliferation of typefaces and type manipulations available represents a new level of visual pollution threatening our culture. Out of thousands of typefaces, all we need are a few basic ones and trash the rest. '*

Whatever the case may be, I am not of the opinion that *Emigre* has contributed to the pollution he describes, if at all it exists, save only in the catologues of Letraset.

The proliferation of typefaces available is in reality not a problem at all, just as the amount of pop groups with records available does not constitute a national calamity. Vignelli has placed the issue of type on a pedestal and held it up to be something holy, just as the designers in the time of Piet Zwart had done.

Vignelli has made himself the self appointed spokesman for an aesthetic that he himself embodies, the International style. There is no-one in the fashion world that says everybody must adhere to this suit or style of dress, no writer who says the way that he writes is the only way to do it. Vignelli seems to be on a personal crusade to rid the design world of undesirables, and has chosen Emigre as his scapegoat. In an article in Print *magazine*, Emigre is defended by Chuck Byrne, a fellow Californian designer , reacts by saying,

'Part of the reason established designers don't like Emigre has to do with a turf imperative. Massimo Vignelli believes Rudy is threatening his predominance in his field because of his follwing. Massimo and all those Modernists were revolutionary, but now when it comes time to change what what they changed, they are proving to be the biggest fucking

crybabies you've ever seen. They're just worse than the people they tried to change before.'
(Dooley, Michael. 1992, pg.55)

This statement, although harsh. has a certain amount of truth attatched to it. When the international Style first became established it was considered revolutionary, but as time went on it became the norm, and the adopted voice of corporate conservatism.   April Grieman believes that,

'The International style was based on a simple set of values, and we're living in an age of enormous complexity. The tools that we have are much more complex and allow more levels of information. Emigre is one example, and a very good example, of a different kind of reading, a textural emotional reading. And that's probably something that whole generation of Modernists just won't even begin to understand. I think the reason Vignelli would be outraged is that whole International Style represents a dinosaur that is definitely wagging its tail for the last time. Major capitalism and so-called democracy and all this corporate money that supported design so it had to have one look, one voice, one colour, one typeface, and all that neutral Swiss greedy stuff, that world is crumbling. We're in a different time. The power

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structures, the big bucks telling people what kind of information they could have and when they could have it, is now being totally blown open by the information revolution, and by being truly able to network. There can now be a participatory, interactive kind of information flow'.
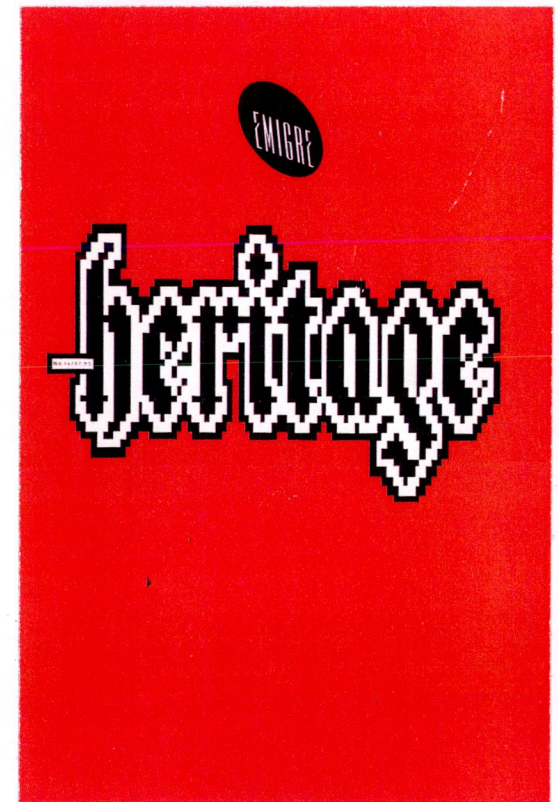
(Dooley, Michael. 1992, pg.57)

Vanderlans and his contemporaries seem to be citing technology as the tool which gives them the power and the inspiration to rebel. Vanderlans, Licko and their contemporaries succeeded in instigating a search for a new visual order, but only time will tell just how many implications their work will have on a whole generation of emerging designers.

Vanderlans as always remains undeterred by the attacks of Vignelli and other modernists and simply says,

'I think I would stop publishing if I myself got bored with it. But if it's going to bore other people then that's really too bad. The bottom line is, if I can't make a living off it, then I'll stop. Right now, Zuzana and I keep selling more magazines, we keep selling more typefaces, we continue to sell records. So there must be people out there who enjoy what we're doing!'

(Dooley, Michael. 1992, pg.112)

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