National College of Art and Design;
Faculty of Design – Visual Communication;

Polymorphous Text

The visual language of Massin , Drucker and Baines.

Communicators of type.

by Barbara Galvin;
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II

contents:

III

list of plates:

IV

Introduction – Visual language
a look at language as a system of exchanging codes

Joseph Beuys said:

> the development of art as everybody instinctively knows, is one
> of the most important things in the world because it reflects the
> fact that secret things are condensed, especially in human beings.
> So the movement of art in words is a kind of approach to this
> threshold. (Alexander, Ed, '95, p25)

This thesis will look at three designers whose work is considered to be typo-
graphically based and who through their production of artist's books move
into the realm of fine art. I will discuss and compare their work and the tan-
gents from tradition revealed in their work that attempts to bring a new
understanding to each element on the page. As examples of type based work
and type based designers/artists/printers who make artist's books I will look
at Robert Massin, French typographer, designer, writer, photographer and
biographer; Phil Baines, British designer, typographer, teacher, writer and
maker of artist's books; Johanna Drucker, American designer, writer, typog-
rapher, type historian and printer. Each designer has, in theory, similar views
on the integrity of the letterform and the power of type to transcend the
meaning of the text. I have taken some examples of their work to illustrate
their approach and the techniques used in specific visual text pieces. All have
produced their work using the letterpress process and have redefined the pri-
ority of the letter. This thesis is an attempt to illustrate the importance that
each of these designers places on the printed word and on the inherent char-
acteristics of the print process to enhance meaning. I will begin this by intro-
ducing the subject of visual language and its origins in book and poetic form.

The reason for my interest in this area stems from a long romance I have had
in my own work with the language of type and its ability to be more than a
coding system of exchange. Through my work many questions have surfaced
in relation to the power of the letter and the word on the page. I have been
intrigued with the origins of language formation and the parallel between the
development of type design, and the refinement of language. In a previous
piece of work I referred to this as 'impressions of the mind, phrased elo-
quently and punctuated for universal understanding'. (Galvin, '93) For me this
metaphor conveys the sensibilities of letterpress printing along with the
grammatical constraints of language; to interweave and intertwine words in a
communicating visual; to reveal the meaning within the content through the
visual manipulation of the words.

01

I wish to discuss aspects of 'text–based expressive work', I will look at the language that is both visual-textual and visual-illustrative.

In acknowledging the language of the hieroghyphs of Egypt, in which the understanding was an optical transmission apprehended through the eye. The seventeenth centuries, 'Hermeneutics' (a method of explaining biblical writings in relation to place and time) relied on the receiver of the message to bring all level of understanding, understanding on emotional and aesthetic level, to the reading of the work. (Alexander, Ed, '95) 'Prosody' (loudness and speed) in print, type uses letterform weight and size to create stress or emphasis in a text piece, in the visual presentation; its usage conveys the tone or attitudes of the author, known as 'prosodic visual cues'. (Smuddle, '9 pp75–87) Combining elements of type as language and type as imagery creates visual poetry. Taking Dick Higgins' description about a poem that has been modified by a typographer in its presentation, he says he cannot read every word but its visual form brings him closer to the work and unites what he calls the 'horizons', of both the artist and the typographer. (Alexander, Ed, '95 p17) The poem is one element, the typographer is the other and that's where the 'fusion of horizons' takes place. The typographer takes the poem and through their interpretation conveys a different level of meaning. (Poynor, '96 p13) Using examples of printed media, I will explain the art form that is visual language.

chapter one – visual language takes form

chapter one – visual language takes form

book

In looking at how visual language takes form, a good example to begin with would be the book. Ulisses Carion described the book as a 'sequence of spaces'. (Alexander, Ed, '95 p27) Drucker describes a book as open, available and accessible. It is a portable companion, it works without batteries and 'it makes itself again as a new experience, a new encounter.' (Alexander, Ed, '95 p32) Steven Clay said that 'the world is like a book, literally, pictorially,' and 'I am a collector and the book is the place where I keep my findings'. Clay continues to elaborate that his books are 'encyclopedic art'. (Alexander, Ed, '95 p20)

The book comes in many forms and contains many mysteries or as Clay puts it, 'organic history and human memory'. (Alexander, Ed, '95 p22) Type operates on both linguistic and graphic levels it is comprised of form and content. To illustrate the approach Clay says of his artist's books, 'I use the type, the abstract, the design, the image the formula' to produce his books. For Clay 'the book is a world'. (Alexander, Ed, '95 p26) Therefore, the work composes all aspects that convey messages or communication contained in the format of the book. It is an experience, a breath of the body of work. To extend the inquiry of text based work, I would like to discuss Concrete Poetry.

03

Concrete Poetry – solidifying poetry

Concrete Poetry encompasses many ingredients that are inherent to language, print and the visual fine arts. It may be composed of letter(s), number(s), picture(s) and colour(s). Many kinds of media have been used in this form such are the typewriter, rubber stamps, stencils, lettering, informal handwriting, rub–down lettering, collage, decollage, painting, drawing, photomontage, frottage, assemblage and sculptural modes. (Mayer, '96 pp70–77) Concrete poetry appears to have been a relatively new form of expression, becoming apparent during the '50s. Its history stretches back to the Egyptian hieroghyphs and to 1700 BC, when the 'Phaistos Disc' was found in Créte. (Mayer, '96 pp70–77) Concrete poetry is an awareness of the graphic space as a structure to where it exists. It is ambiguous both in its poetic construction and in typographic arrangement. It becomes a poem that not only is translated and transformed by the typographic treatment; it becomes visual poetry in itself.

However it does not have to follow linguistic or typographic rules. It can be composed of anything from a collection of coloured shapes, to images such as a pyramid of eyes. 'Lying somewhere between painting and poetry', it can be figurative or abstract. Reaching its peak in the 1960s, concrete poetry — a kind of underground art-form had by the 1980 s almost disappeared. However, in the anarchy magazine layouts of David Carson, Tomato and the abstract electronic marks made by Neville Brody's *Fuse* typeface magazine, concrete poetry continues. (Mayer, '96 pp70–77) Pre–concrete poetry is termed pattern poetry. Possibly the best known example is the two mice (tales) tails from *Alice in Wonderland* by Lewis Carroll [Fig no. 1:1], which is the only example

Fig no. 1:1
Two Mice Tails - Lewis Carroll

from this period that is signed. Many examples were discovered that date from the same period but are by anonymous authors, these often taking the form of circles, sets of pyramids and wings. (Higgins, '86 p29) I will look briefly at the form pattern poetry can take.

04

Pattern poetry

Pattern poetry in the English language, dates from the late sixteenth and eighteenth centuries, with some examples from the nineteenth century. All the shapes are influenced by shapes from Hellenistic Greece, and almost all are to be found in book form, unlike Swedish or German pattern poetry which favoured the broadsheet format over the book.

There are no reported English language pattern poems in Ireland; only two examples exist in manuscript form in the Irish language. These are to be found in Trinity College Dublin, one in *The Book of Armagh*, under the chapter heading 'The Book of Revelation,' which features a diamond shape that could be interpreted as an urn, dating from the 9th Century. The second example is an inverted pyramid introduction to a poem by Cathan O'Duinn, also found in Trinity College. It is a collection of genealogies, tales and poems concerning the families of *Ibh Eaehach of Munster*, and dates from the eighteenth century. They are also referred to as 'shaped prose'. (HIggins, '86 p41)

Figured poem

Calligrammes (another form of figured poems) by the French poet
Apollinaire (1912–17), also come under the heading of visual language.
Appollinaire's calligrammes are well known examples, where sometimes the
pictorial composition involves the whole poem and corresponds to the title.
Massin quotes Apollinaire who said that,

> Typographic gimmicks handled with great daring have the
> advantage of giving rise to a visual lyricism which was virtual-
> ly unknown to previous generations. These tricks and devices
> can go even further and achieve a synthesis of the arts, of
> music, painting and literature. (Massin, '71)

The figured poem shares the puzzling coding of pictorial riddle. It does not
replace linguistic units with picture, but creates a picture or a series of com-
plex pictures by the arrangement of the text. In the figured poem the text
takes precedence over the arrangement. The calligrammes are a poetic form
rather than a fine art piece. (Ernst, '86 p11)

The text in the figured poem carries the suggestion of music in the letter-
forms which can be defined as 'letter poetry'. (Ernst '86 p13) Letter Poetry
always had artistic ambitions and has been a poetic art form within a literary
category and not an off-shoot of a typographical or textual interpretation.
The figured poem is an international genre, with its influences reaching
beyond the boundaries of European literature, to writing in Turkish, Hebrew,
Indian and Chinese. (Ernst, '86 p9)

Massin - acoustical imagery

verbal language and the printed visual -*The Bald Soprano*

Massin - acoustical imagery
verbal language and the printed visual - *The Bald Soprano*

I have chosen Robert Massin's work as an example of a typographer and graphic artist who has, in my opinion, successfully integrated the word with image, and who has sensitively responded to the text in visual terms to convey the importance of its meaning. He has the ability and creativity to translate into the medium of words and image, words as imagery. Massin reinforces the message by creating tensions within the text; that is, the text appeals to the reader because it becomes a visual language to be interpreted by the senses and absorbed like an event happening in front of the reader.

Massin was born in a country village to the southwest of Paris in 1925. His mother, a teacher, and his father, a monument mason, allowed Massin, at the age of four and a half, to cut his name and address in stone. This is perhaps where Massin built a regard for the letter form and the written word. (Hollis. '94 p.69) Massin, who stopped using his first name in the 1950s, not only was a typographer, designer and reporter, but also the author of historical studies, novels and autobiographical writings, as well as being a photographer and a biographer. He is a collector of text-based imagery, a collection which he catalogued and published as *La Lettre et L'image*, which is a comprehensive reference of visual/textual interpretation. (Meggs '94) [Fig no. 2:1]

Fig no. 2:1
Examples of books by Massin
Letter et L'image

Massin was more interested in becoming a theatre reviewer than a typographer, and he succeeded in becoming the editor of the French Book Club's monthly newsletter. He wrote articles and was responsible for the paste-ups and this led him into design. 'Le Club Millieur Livre', where Massin worked from 1952, was one of several book clubs that met the demand for books by the French public. Club members could choose one of four books each month and, as there was no competition for books on shelves, book jackets did not have to be eye-catching, and this provided a platform for Massin to experiment with book cover designs. (Hollis. '95 p.68) [Fig no. 2:2]
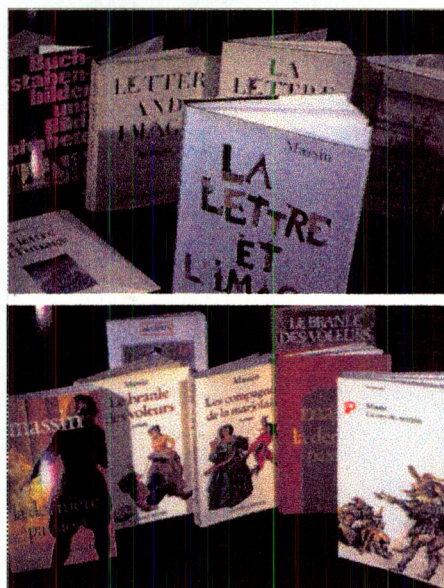
Although he was responsible for the paste-ups, Massin admits in his autobiography *L'ABC du Meiteur*, that:

> I knew nothing about typography, and I felt this was the technical obstacle I did not know how to solve. Imagination and creativity was not enough to correct my ignorance of the rules of type. (Massin, ' 89)

Massin met with a typographer called Rossi, who familiarised him with typography. He says in *L'ABC du Meiteur* :

> I breathed the odour, I made friends with the characters, that is I recognised easily the typefaces of Garamond and Bodoni. He [Rossi] instilled within me the body and the eyes of the characters, the interline spacing, its strengths, and brought my attention to the small capitals... We did not always agree... but thanks to Rossi, I learned my craft in six weeks. (Massin, '89)

Around this time also, Massin had met with Pierre Faucheux, a graphic designer for the satirical journal *La Rue*. Faucheux gave Massin a passion for typography. In her unpublished thesis on Massin, Bradley writes: 'Faucheux was his role model and instructor.' (Bradley, '93 p.22)

Enthused by Faucheux and the help of Rossi, Massin began to produce work to equal that of Faucheux's. Massin thought of typography in terms of musical notation. He had worked for France Musique and has always retained a passion for music, especially that of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Massin felt that all elements of typographic design should be thought of in musical terms, due to his love of music and devotion to the ideal of a correspondence between the arts, which he expresses thus:

> Si j'ai fait du graphiste un architecte, un scénographé,un cneáste, voire un compositeur faisant de la musique san le savoir, C'est parce que, selon moi... les frontiéres n'existent pas entre ces différentes disciplines. (Bradley, '93 p.22)

Faucheux gave Massin an aesthetic with which to approach type. In Faucheux's own words,

> you can try to make a link between the meaning of the words and the style of the type in which they are set... We have to strike a perfect balance between the text, its meaning, and the meaning the reader will give to the printed words. (Hollis, '95 p.68)

Massin, through his work, demonstrates his great respect for the ideas of Faucheux, with whom he worked for many years before joining Gallimard book publishers in 1958. He became the Art Director in 1960 and the ethos he adopted here was: 'retain, restore and renew.' (Hollis, '95 p.69) Through Massin's work with Gallimard, he had many opportunities to take on more demanding work. He was involved in the mass production of books, like many of the other large publishing houses. He produced a standard format cover for a series of books to increase the quantity of books produced and reduce the publishing costs. Massin developed a format that comprised a white cover using Fry's Baskerville type to typeset the title and author's name. The technique used by Massin in this series divided text from the image and did not aspire to his earlier innovative jacket designs with Faucheux. Massin referred to the approach as a small poster, in which some type and an image have to be positioned, so that they might hold the attention of the viewer. In this way they fulfil the same function of grabbing the public's attention. Massin compares the designer's white rectangle with:

> the writer's blank sheet- in which the title, author's name and sometimes an image have to be positioned. (Hollis, '95 p.70)

The Bald Prima Donna \ La Cantatrice Chauve

In 1964 Massin took on a project, acting as a sort of stage director, to translate the atmosphere, movement and speeches, including the silent pauses of the play by Eugene Ionesco, titled *La Cantatrice Chauve (The Bald Prima Donna or Soprano)*. [Fig no.2:3] This is perhaps the most spectacular of examples that illustrate the idiosyncrasies of the spoken word. Massin attempts to convey a literal translation of a stage play into a two dimensional object in book format. (Meggs, '94)

Fig no. 2:3
Ionesco's Play – *La Cantatrice Chauve* covers

verbal language — the play developed

Ionesco was not a lover of the theatre, but he wrote *La Cantatrice Chauve* as an attempt at the anti-play, which uses the inane to expose 'the inadequacies of verbal communication.' (Meggs, '94) In 1948, Eugéne Ionesco decided to learn English by copying sentences in a conversational manual. He became fascinated with the use of common day phrases in stilted exchanges between characters. The exchanges use literal language, such as 'the ceiling is above us' and 'the ground is below us'. Ionesco found this to be an unnecessary use of language and could only be used by characterless people. (Meggs, '94) The play is now a classic of French literature and has been on the Paris stage for the past thirty-seven years. It offers a glimpse of petit-bourgeois life, represented by the comings and goings of two English couples, and belongs to the theatre of the absurd which mocks traditional theatre. (Hollis, '95 p.68)

Ionesco's characters speak in clichés, as do their typographical equivalents. Massin called upon the techniques of the comic strip and cinema (for which he completed much work), to express time and sequence in the play. He used high contrast photographs of the actors, so that they became figured shapes on the white page. He achieved a stereotyped imagery and this adaptation enhanced the cliched aspect of the play enormously. (Meggs, '94)

Massin achieves the individuality of the actors by giving each of them a typeface (Grotesque 215 and Gill italic, semi-bold Egyptian and Cheltenham bold). Massin introduced the cast with a list of the names of the characters in their unique typefaces and with a photographic image beside it. This allowed the reader to make a visual connection between the character and the text, as this was an important aspect in the interpretation of the play's climax. [Fig no. 2 : 4]

the printed visual

On opening the book the reader is startled by a confrontation with the characters [Fig no. 2:5] who are leaning forward in an intimidating manner, rather than an inviting one. The atmosphere of intrusion begins at this point. The first seven spreads include typography of the script and photographs of the actors, creating with dynamic structures in diagonal type
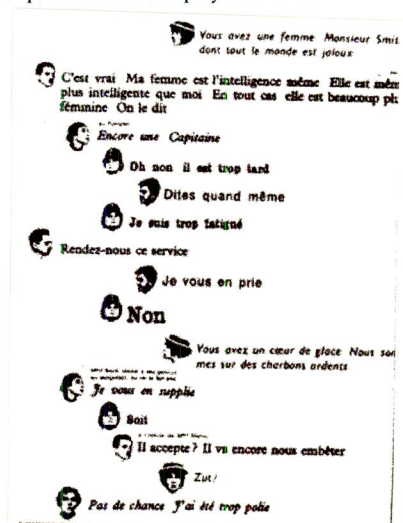
Fig no. 2:4 **Introducing the characters
and their typeface**

and effectively using the white page. The overlapped words can still be deciphered by the reader [Fig no. 2:6].

On the eighth spread the photographs of the actors are dispensed with, as this is where the language begins to intensify and create the dramatic imagery in itself [Fig no. 2:7]. Massin regarded the white space on the page as a very important aspect of his work. It signified the importance he placed on the strong evocative quality and ability of white space to express the language of silence, as he expressed:

> Ce son les intervalles qui créent les tensions.
>
> Le typographic est harmonie des blanc.
> (Bradley, '93 p.40)

Fig no. 2:5
Characters leaning forward on opening the page

Fig no. 2:6
page to illustrate the overlapping of words
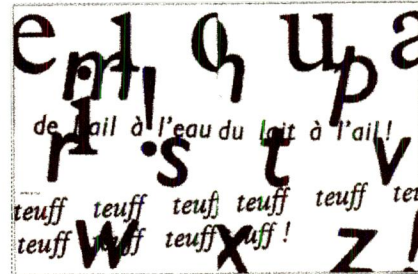
Fig no. 2:7
the language of the play becomes intense and creates the dramatic imagery

As the conflicts in the situation of the play intensify, Massin created a series of typographic abstractions [Fig no. 2:8] in his expression of the chaos in the play. (Meggs. '94) He reversed the background, (white type out of a black background), which intensified the argumentative atmosphere within the text as it moves down the page. The following spreads become more disjointed and the type becomes an illegible text of chaotic word shapes and patterns. Forms are jostling as if they were returning to the roots of their language, and the actors are left only with vowels to exchange in dialogue. [Fig no. 2:9]

Massin had to overcome many problems in his interpretation of the play, for example the physical movement on stage of the actors and how to illustrate and translate

Fig no. 2:8
Massin expressing chaos in the play

• 1

The silent pause in the play is spread over 22 double spreads which in a book containing 145 pages which becomes a large portion of the book. Massin decided upon the number of 22 pages to equal the time it would take the reader to look through this portion of the book. This time approximately equated to the two minutes of silence in the stage play.

(Meggs, '94)

that in two dimensional book form. Massin describes how he dealt with these problems:

> Sometimes I cursed them for wanting to be always on the move and forcing me to shrink the text. It also made it difficult to keep the replies in the correct order, obliging me to intertwine and overlap the speech balloons. (Meggs, '94)
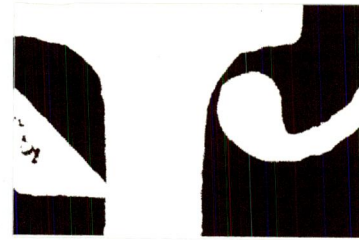
Fig no. 2:9 **page to illustrate the exchange of vowels**

He also had to convey the silences that appeared in the play. To achieve a sense of time equivalence in the book, Massin had a series of twenty-two pages where he repeated the same image. Each spread features the same image of the actors, with a random word from one of each of the characters. These spreads are without interactive dialogue and are used to suggest silences in the play. Ionesco was particularly pleased with this part of the play. It represented a two minute silence in stage time which is an eternity in the theatre. He used this device to achieve a sense of time and space to the reader., As Massin said, 'the major problem, which I think I did solve, was to put the stage space into two dimensions of the book page'•1. (Meggs, '94) [Fig no. 2:10]

011

Richard Hollis documents Massin recalling all the details and graphic techniques, the photographs taken by Henry Cohen, the hours spent on design work, much of it at night. Massin used the photographs and projected proofs of type, through an epidiascope. He drew layouts of the same size for each double-page spread on tracing paper and 'posterised' the illustrations in black

Fig no. 2:10 **spread repeated 22 times to illustrate 2 minutes silence in the play**

and white, halftone-free like the text. The images were combined with the type, giving a consistent graphic unity to the image and integrating the representation of what spectators would see and hear at a performance. (Hollis, '95 p.76)

.2

Massin believed he has a
perfect eye from birth,
he says that he recog-
nised the shape of the
letterform before he
could read.
He said that he had an
eye for the beauty of the
text was which he
believes to be in born.
(Gali & Brower '96)

Massin and type in general—acoustical images

Massin always felt that musical considerations provide useful metaphors for
typographic problems: 'une exécution musicale permanente.' (Bradley, '93 p.38)
In Bradley's thesis, cited from *La Misé en Pages*, Massin discusses his view on
colour when he says: 'In the typographic space there are no non colours,
black is a colour, white is a colour and all the greys between are colours'.
He saw the potential of the musical influence in typography as the 'book
orchestra'. (Bradley, '93 p7) Saussure (a Swiss linguist) defined it:

> as a psychic entity, and its characterisation is fundamental to
> understanding what follows. The concept is completely men-
> tal, it is the thought value of the sign; the acoustic image is
> composed of sound syllables insofar as they may be held in
> mind, defined as mental. (Drucker, '94 p 22)

The book became a livre object, 'akin to an art work'. (Massin, '89) He felt that
typography played a major role for the author who was the designer of the
message, and the typographer who arranged the message on the page, so that
it could be easily read •3. (Bradley, '93 p.7) As Saussure said: 'The written word
merges itself so intimately with the spoken word of which it is the image...'
(Drucker, '94 p18)

012

Massin achieved through *La Cantatrice Chauve* many experimental effects such
as re-shaping text photographically, or having the text cast in rubber so it
could be manipulated by being stretched and warped into expressive shapes
(anticipating computer manipulation so common today). He gave importance
to the role of the typographer by illustrating the expressive quality of the
typeface, its inherent relationship to the subject matter and, more important-
ly, its conveyance of the writer's meaning to the audience. Massin himself
acknowledges the importance of the reader and he said: 'that the reader reads
something in the image of the words. (Hollis, '95 p.68,72)

Philip Meggs describes Ionesco as a visionary who believed that: 'the renewal
of language could bring about a fresh vision of the world'. Massin is a graphic
designer, whose primary concern has been to give visual reality to literary
content. Ionesco invented his own language to convey the absurd. Massin was
able to translate this language into a graphic piece that gave substance to
Ionesco's imagination. (Meggs, '94)
Massin has always embraced the new technologies to test his typographical
experiments and from the revolutionary rub-down lettering of Letraset, to
present day Macintosh design output, Massin continues to express the mean-
ing through the word •2.

The History of the World and Johanna Drucker

Drucker as a child
kept a little notebook and
pen around her neck and
she would bring this with
her everywhere so that she
could write down all the
events that might
happen to her.
(Alexander, Ed, '96)

The History of the World and Johanna Drucker

Letters have elements in their own right
...they are capable of carrying discrete messages...
Letters possess a V!V!D ability to create. (Drucker, '84 p14)

In this chapter on Johanna Drucker •3 I will look at her contribution to typography. Initially I would like to look at her own personal history, to see what events in her life may have influenced her particular approach to type. Also, I would like to define the contribution that she brings to her work that makes it unique. I would like to look briefly at her techniques using selected examples of her work, in particular her book *History of the/my wor(l)d* to examine how she explores typography.

Drucker's history

Drucker studied at the California College of Arts and Crafts (CCAC) in the early 1970s when she became involved in the making of artist's books. She is a writer, designer, editor of artist's books, an academic typographical historian and also writes academic books on type and gender theory. (Lupton, '95 p77)

013

Drucker began her work with artist's books upon encountering letterpress printing. She continues to use this form of printing although it is a labour-intensive medium. She also began to use Macintosh equipment in 1990 and managed to incorporate the compositional freedom of the Mac with letterpress materiality in her books. She admits her initial encounter with the Mac was a 'technological nightmare' while at the same time opening new possibilities in her work. (Lupton, '95 p76) The letterpress technique maintains even lines of type in a grid structure and Drucker sees this as a language in itself; it adds something to the subject matter unobtainable through other processes. Drucker has been inspired by the technology of letterpress in the production of themes and ideas in her work. Drucker says 'rather than feeling hampered by the physical constraints of letterpress, I have used its characteristics to structure works.' (Drucker, '84 p8)

She says that letterpress has enabled her to experiment further and investigate language in its printed form more effectively, through the substitution or elimination of type characters and of the elements that can alter the meaning of the text.

the essence of Drucker's work

Drucker displays a social consciousness of her environment in her book work. Although she makes these books in the age of a computer conscious culture, she has managed to capture an essential humanity that reflects life itself. Using familiar themes she approaches them with a new and fresh energy by using the familiar icons of advertising to incorporate complex metaphors and ideas in her books. I have chosen her as an example of a contemporary designer/writer whose decisions concerning the priority of the letterform reveal its innate ability to expose a new visual language hidden in the text. She has access to all modern forms of technology but chooses not to use them.

unique approaches to work

The limitations of the letterpress printing process have stimulated the concepts behind her books. With reference to her book *A to Z* she said:

> by being forced to improvise spellings I found
> dimensions of meaning in the words that were
> not immediately apparent in normal usage •4.
> (Drucker, '84 p13)

Her artist's books are complex poetic constructions with obtuse use of language. Her work focuses on text and typography. She concentrates on the formal properties of typography, its capacity to extend meaning. She feels that in handsetting the type, her focus is placed entirely on the letters and the language they create as a sequence of discrete words. (Drucker, '84 p8) Each letter has unique properties, size, shape, weight and style, to be positioned from a number of limitless arrangements to convey the message. As she said of her book *A to Z* : 'I was concerned with having the very text itself dictated by the material means at my disposal.' (Drucker, '84 p9)

Her use of space is specific in her work. She describes in relation to an interpretation book piece titled *26'76* that:

> The spatial arrangements
> were very specific from
> the office in the attic to
> the dressing room in the
> basement, each step on
> the page corresponded
> to a level in the physical
> structure of the building.
> (Drucker, '84 p3)
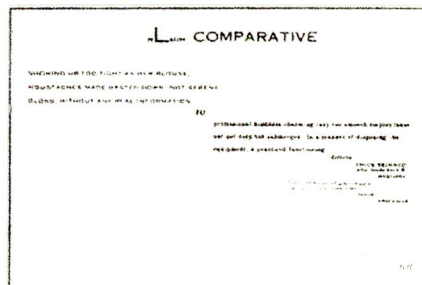
Fig no. 3:1
Page spread from *26'76* by J. Drucker

•4

The story behind the book

A to Z is based on a three

day journey Drucker took

to a house where a perfor-

mance would take place.

(Drucker '94 p.9)

To illustrate this quote look at Fig no. 3:1 and observe the stepping of the text. This illustrates each step taken in the conversation as it happened in the event. Drucker illustrates the text at the place in the building it was said, on the step the word was uttered. This book literally translates the physical paths taken in the environment of the theme of the book. It is a literal interpretation of the conversations placed within their environment. From the attic of the house the text follows the route down the stairs to the basement.

Like Massin in *La Cantatrice Chauve*, Drucker used a coding system in one of her books to represent the characters in the bibliography. In her book *26'76* each character was identified with a letter of the alphabet or a number that corresponded with the placement in the alphabet, eg: A = 1, B = 2, etc. This was used for the purpose of reference throughout the work [Fig no. 3:2]. (Drucker, '84 p9)

Fig no. 3:2 *26'76* **Drucker uses a coding system to identify the page and the corresponding character.**

015

For Drucker, experimental typography reunites two modes of expression that were considered separate by modern criticism, ie. the visual and verbal aspects of design.

The History of the / my Wor(l)d,

> The book of the world, the word, the book of knowledge, the book of light and the books which had to be okayed by the librarian before they could be taken out. (Drucker, '90)

Fig no. 3:3 **title page of History of the / my wor(l)d**

The History of the / my wor(l)d (1991) [Fig no. 3:3] written, designed and printed by Johanna Drucker, documents the history of the world in three narrative layers. The first main narrative is a general and an ideal view of the world's history, based on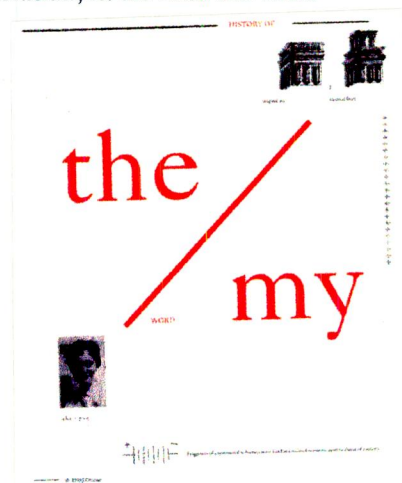 history as documented in books dictated by the ruling powers. This generalised view of history quickly conveys the beginnings, discovery, ignorance and questionable development of the world (for its betterment or its demise). The type is set in a traditional serif font in black ink. The block format of the text concentrates the readers attention, and impairs the readability of the second and third narratives. The conclusion to this first narrative is bleak and not very hopeful for the future.

The second narration, in red print, runs in a linear pattern through the main narrative, and is an expression of the history of the world according to Drucker's understanding of it. This is a very personal and emotive reaction to her early environment while growing up. It is also the silent private voice of Drucker conveyed in a smaller text running in a linear pattern throughout the book. This device allows for both a general and personal interpretation of the texts. The third is a more definite elaboration on the contents of the first and second narratives. These snippets of information highlight the true realities of the world situation in both the positive and negative sense.

016

The full title reads: *History of the World, of my word and of the world and of my world*. The typographic treatment allows the reader to interpret the complete title as a visual response. To expand the title further, there is no world only the knowing of the world through the learning and experience of it in the environment and in the information that is gathered within that environment. The experience is largely accessed through dialogue / language. Her language was accessed through her mother, the source of all Drucker's knowledge and learning. (Drucker, '90)

The book looks at learning language and attaining knowledge / awareness of the world / environment. It is about writing and the book being a vehicle for writing. It evokes memories, tradition and history and most effectively, highlights the established order in language: order = gender. (Drucker, '90) An issue central to this piece is a description Drucker wrote on language in *Liberation* that:

> raising the question of whether language is merely descriptive
> of the world, in fact mirrors it in its very structure, or actual-
> ly creates the world and its apparent order as a mental con-
> struct. (Drucker, '84 p8)

Drucker must have been preparing her book, *History of the / my wor(l)d* at this time and had considered how her gender as a female had placed her within

that history in terms of 'a mental construct'. It incorporates Drucker's own experience in learning language and of learning in general, where her future could have been a replica of her mother's. Drucker's mother was for her the source of all language, limit, law; she was science, literature and decorum-order, imagination and behaviour. (Drucker, '90) The text is as Drucker expresses, 'both intensely personal, sensual and specific' to her own experience. (Drucker, '90)

the personal
aspect of the book

In *Eye*, Lupton quotes Drucker on *History of the / my wor(l)d* as she articulates her version of feminist theory. She combines stock images of majorettes and fashion with a text that personifies language as a physical fleshy medium. (Lupton, '95 p76) 'In the beginning was the world, nursed on the warm

beginning was the world, nursed on the warm breast of chaos fast following a night of

hard publicity. Genetics produced the fullness thereof and a new

Fig no. 3:4 **Majorette image from** *History of the /my wor(l)d* **by J.Drucker**

017

breast of chaos...' (Drucker, '95) The majorette images symbolised for Drucker the image of perfection, ie: her mother - all-American girl, blue eyed and blonde hair— a muse. (Drucker, '90) [Fig no. 3:4] The imagery of the fashion stills and majorettes are cliched and these are taken from their familiar environment and placed with captions, combining historical and personal references to history and the history of Drucker and her family life. Their order of appearance is determined by the narrative of the history of the world. (Drucker, '90)

constructional layout

The type is a polymorphous text, a structure that breaks with the unified linearity dictated by the process. The placing of several layers of text, read against each other, using 'fragmentations of plurality', making some narratives collide with the organising insistence of the main narrative that creates a distinctive format. The book is also concerned with autoecriture (writing oneself), ie. Drucker and the process of learning language. (Drucker, '90) The first contradiction within the typography is the juxtapositioning of history against memory, what is dictated and what is familiarly known.
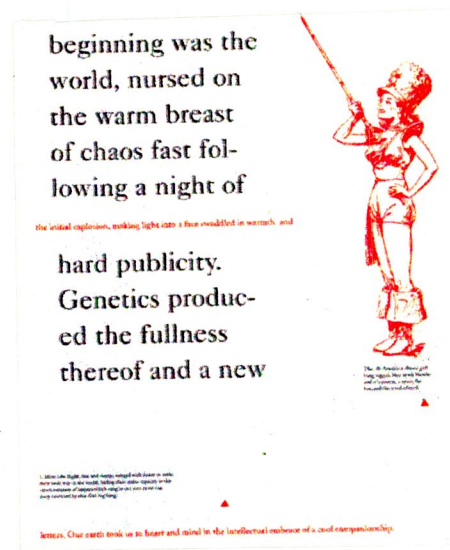
•5

Drucker's acceptance
into the circle of author-
ing was difficult as she
found her gender and
choice of writing was
dictated by a precon-
ceived idea of what and
who writers should be
and what they should
write about. She found
that it was a male domi-
nated occupation and it
was very difficult for her
views and ideas to be
recognised.
(Drucker, '84)

The master narrative of history is placed against Drucker's own personal rec-
ollections and knowledge of the world. She admits in her article for *Liberation*
that:

> I repeatedly used the possibility of structuring more than one
> value or meaning ('plurivalence') into the language on the
> level of the word, the sentence and the page. (Drucker, '84 p9)

Therefore Drucker is calling the readers to consider their own history and
their place within that history. The book is feminist, its approach and layout is
sympathetic to the feminine form. It occupies a space deliberately set in
opposition to masculinity, masculine being defined as unified, singular and
linear.

Drucker as author •5

Authoring is an important part of Drucker's books. On the question of a
writer leaving the layout of their book to a designer, Drucker says: 'I think
it's pretty strange to take somebody else's text and do weird typographic
stuff to it.' She asks, 'What permission do you have: You can totally transform
the meaning of the text through an extreme typographic treatment.' (Lupton,
'95 p74) There is no compromise – only writers should be involved in decid-
ing how their work is manipulated/interpreted on the page.

018

Drucker has written extensively on issues concerning gender and related sub-
jects. Gender studies and issues of feminism have been central to many
important turning points in Drucker's life as a writer and communicator. She
incorporates feminist theory and criticism in all her work. Her interest in
feminist theory began through looking at French language-oriented psycho-
analytically based theorists, like Julia Kristeva. Kristeva examined language 'as
a system that not only reflects the relationship between power, gender and
authors, but creates, inscribes and perpetrates them.' (Drucker, '90) This is pos-
sibly the yardstick against which Drucker has measured her work since. To
complete an understanding of this aspect in Drucker's work requires explana-
tion of her gender theories and is not the purpose of this thesis. She generates
a notable challenge today for female designers/typographers and makers of
artist's books to consider and adopt the theories she presents.

Two issues motivate Drucker's work: the first is the visual structure produc-
ing meaning and the second, the relationship between language and experi-
ence. Drucker is intensely interested in polymorphous (visual inscriptional,
multi-layered) text. The texts refuse any linearity, yet work with a narrative
line. (Drucker, '90) Her work extends the meaning of the written text, with her

unorthodox use of type on the page. She could be accused of eliminating the
word completely, but she believes her approach serves to call attention to the
'structure of the norms, (the familiar structures of compositional texts) as
appropriate deliveries of the written word.' (Drucker, '84 p9)

She wishes that someday the two aspects of her work – her academic writing
and her artist's books – could work closer together. (Lupton, '95 p77) The poetic
structures of both aspects of Drucker's work as quoted in *Eye*, says, 'I want
people in the world of art history and the world of literature to know that
typography belongs to both these worlds.' (Lupton, '95 p76)
Drucker has written many academic books but *The Visible Word* and *The
Alphabetic Labyrinth* are two great contributions to the academic understand-
ing of the origins of visual language and its beginnings through Futurist and
Dadaist typography. Stephen Mallarmé, the poet, worked with these typo-
graphic methods. (Drucker, '84 p14) He was the first writer to use manipulated
text to express his poetry. Drucker's artist's books include formal and exper-
imental aspects as practiced by contemporary designers. (Lupton, '95 p72) *The
Alphabetic Labyrinth*, is a history of the origins of letters. These books are a
comprehensive study and body of work on the importance of the letter form
itself and its power on the page to translate and transcend information.
(Lupton, '95 p77)

Phil Baines

and the rendering of words to form shapes in visual poetry

Phil Baines

and the rendering of words to form shapes in visual poetry

> ...an unassuming man with a devotional obsession with type.
>
> (Boag, '89 p27)

> The first impressions of his London flat, which displays a col-
> lection of maps and transport images, and way out sinage, all
> reveal the 'typo-passion and typo-hoarding' of Baines.
>
> (Boag, '91 p.23)

In this chapter I will examine the contribution made to typography by the
designer Phil Baines. Firstly I would like to look at his own personal history,
to examine events in his life that have influenced his decision to work in his
chosen area of design. Then I would like to define his approach to his work,
by looking at some examples of his work, his postcards, typeface ('Can You?')
and his book (S*Tone Utters*), to see how he explores the typography.

Baines' history

Phil Baines was born in 1958, studied for a BA in graphic design at St.
Martins School of Art from 1982-85 and completed his MA at the Royal
College of Art, London, in 1987. (Rombous, '88 p.67) Baines, from the Lake
District, considered entering the priesthood before his design career. He
attended a Catholic Seminary, Ushaw College, in Durham for three years
before he decided that:

> it wasn't what I wanted to commit the rest of my life to. I
> realised I wanted to be involved with art. I wasn't clear about
> what type of art exactly. (Vanderlans, '91)

During his time at the seminary, Baines remembers that he was always doing
some kind of art. He created ordination booklets for services and Paschal
candle wraps, he continues to print using hand set type. (Vanderlans, '91)

the rendering of words to form shapes

Baines teaches letterpress printing partime at St. Martin's College of Art.
Although this method of printing is commercially obsolete, Baines feels the
freedom to physically move type around, to handle type and work within the
disciplined constraints of a limited supply of typefaces is a very useful lesson
for students. Like Drucker, he has found that the limitations of the process
have generated some of the themes in his work, e.g. he likes punctuation
marks and they play an important part in his work, as it does in his typeface
'Can You?' which will be discussed further in this chapter. He sees metal type

as the basis of all typesetting, each letter is set and locked before it is printed and the emphasis is on the placement of type on the page. Its regimented linear construction is restricted only by the creativity of the designer. Baines feels it is challenging to create work under these constraints. (Rombough, '88 p.68)

When Baines attended the Royal College of Art, he did some freelance work, along with designing artists books. His letterpress experience in St. Martin's – his typographic experiments in postcards and candle wraps – was an advantage at this time. He became fascinated with the details of the print process, letter spacing, line spacing, etc. Reflecting on the postcard work that he did in St. Martin's, Baines says: 'if people don't take notice of a printed piece, they are not going to read it'. (Vanderlans, '91)

the essence of Baines' work

Phil Baines displays an aggressive approach to the tradition of typography. He illustrates this through his work by deliberately breaking the rules that govern typography and that are considered to be wrong in the type world. Through his non–conformist use of type Baines manages to prove his theories. Baines uses the letterpress process to achieve inventive and innovative type based approaches to his work. Although much of his work has an apparent contemporary appearance, it is through his manipulation of and experimentation with the traditional letterpress process of printing that he has achieved such competency and authority in his typographic interpretations. Baines manages to break long standing established rules of type and in his disregard for the authority of the past proved his point beyond criticism.

Postcards

Let us examine how Baines explores type by looking at his postcards. His postcards are at times quite difficult to follow and are a disjointed piecing together of letterforms within the space. In Fig no. 4:1 he illustrates his unstandardised use of the page through his letter breaks, giving the appearance of the words being mis-placed. The reader must concentrate for a moment to achieve an understanding of the postcard's content and format. However, the viewer can appreciate the message through the visual compositions of the interwoven texts. Baines admits that all the contents are diary based and

Fig no. 4:1 **Postcard by P. Baines**

•6

They were printed to be sent only to people whom he knew would take the time to read them. His most illegible work, is personally based. (Vanderlans, '91)

•7

Baines has had many prestigious commissions from Monotype which won him a D&AD Award for a series of posters. He has completed map work for the Corporation of the City of London, promotional work for exhibitions for the Craft Council, Books and Filofax inserts, for the colour printer 'Gavin Martin'. (Rombough, '88 p.68)

at times they reveal personal feelings towards certain aspects of his college experience that were not agreeable. [Fig no. 4:2] This card is obviously a reaction to his lecturers and the institution of St. Martins — he sees his lectures as being lazy, unhelpful and overpaid. Baines defends the card's obscure type constructions and apparent illegibility by telling us that the cards were targeted at a very limited hand picked audience.•6 (Vanderlans, '91) He reflects that in his college days he could not remember ever seeing an artist's book or a piece of concrete poetry in the graphic design seminars. He felt that there was much more to be learned from the study of painting and printmaking than from the study of graphic design, so he looked at work that was not produced by graphic designers, but by artists, painters and printers •7. (Vanderlans, '91)

Fig no.4:2
Postcard from degree year P. Baines

Baines has always had the ability to stand out in a crowd — not only because he is an avid cyclist and uses this mode of transport to get around — but also because his work has caused much controversy in England, though he would regard himself as a traditionalist. (Vanderlans, '91) To claims that the standards of type design and typography are declining, Baines replies that standards are not declining as there has always been good and bad typography and this will always be the case; the only change will be that the choice and supply of typefaces and typography will increase. In a positive light, the previously difficult task of designing a typeface has been simplified through the use of computer software. There is greater ease in designing fonts, and that is what he claims matters. (Barnbrook, '91 p.26) This has in a sense liberated typography.

In the debate at STD/CSD 1992, on the motion that 'To be clearly read is the first consideration for typography', Baines spoke for the opposition, highlighting the confusion between legibility and clarity. He argued that readability ignores the sensory experience of interpreting the communication. (Rea, '92, pp.17,20) He illustrated through examples of his own work and others that the total medium rather than the individual words created the message which is obviously an important aspect of design•2 Baseline wrote of Baines:
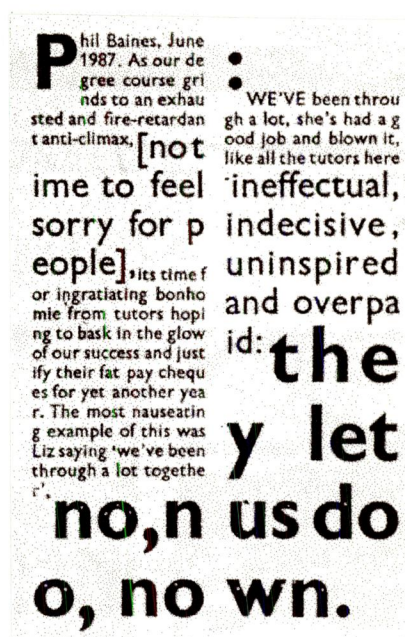
His style is uncompromising,... insisting on the beauty of the letter formation taking precedence over everything else, including obviously legibility. (Campbell,Gray, Eds, '89-p4)

Baines' theological background has had a direct influence on his work. Through producing candle wraps and his reading of Marshall McLuhan's *The Guttenbery Galaxy*, Baines discovered his fascination with manuscript culture. This opened up a new non-linearity in Baines' work that underpins, as he says, 'all I've done since'. (Vanderlans, '91)

words that form shapes
Can You?

Currently he combines his art-based projects with small publishers, along with his teaching at St. Martins College of Art. (Baines, '91) His first typeface 'Can You ?' appeared in issue no.1 of the publication *Fuse*. [Fig no.4:3] *Fuse's* brief asked designers to reduce the letter to the most necessary form needed for the recognition of the letter. The typeface, aptly called 'Can You?', asks the question 'Can you read me?', or the full title, *'Can You? (and do you want to) Read Me?'* It was based on research by Brian Coe into how much of a letter is needed to be recognised. Coe's alphabet was a monoline sans serif [Fig. no.4:4], whereas Baines changed it to a 'modern' type style and he discovered that the serifs allowed him to prune the letters further.

He then changed the font to a Clarendon face which has larger serifs and this gave greater weight to the characters. Baines included the punctuation marks as part of the font exercise as he likes punctuation marks and feels these are an integral element of

ꝗhᴄᴅeꜰᵹh˛ᴋ]ᵐⁿ˥ᵗ [ᵘʳⁿᵗuᴟ˅/ᴢ
▊▊▊▌▐▌▞▨▢▢▢▢▢-▐▌▛ &▢▢▢▢@▌ ~

Fig no. 4:3 **Typeface 'Can You?' P. Baines**

ᴁbᴄᴅeꜰꝗhijkl¬ᴝᴐpꝗᴦeᶜᴜ˅˅·xᵧz

Fig no. 4:4 **Typeface by Brian Coe**

type (unlike some designers who might automatically dispense with punctuation altogether). 'Can You?' is a lower case font and uses the word spacing of the metal type to isolate the words and reinforce recognition. *(Baines, '91).* Baines highlights his own view of the role of type, in his review of the book *The form of the Book* by Jan Tschichold (1902 – 74). He said, as a result of developments in industrial society: 'new roles were found for typography and typefaces were invented to carry the message into the new marketplace.' (Baines, '92 p 52) The effect is a natural progression for type design.

He manufactured a new
blacker ink and introduced a
smooth wove paper to print
Baskerville on. (Boag, '89)

9•

This is a dominant feature in
his work including his
poster work for Monotype.
A good example is the cover
he did for Graphics World
1988, [Fig no. 4:5] words
break and are continued at
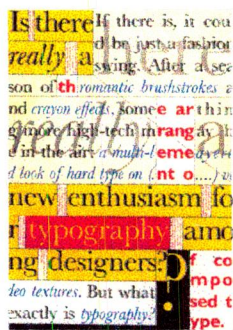another point dictated by
the layout.

Fig no. 4:5
Cover for *Graphics* 1988

visual poetry
STone UTTERS (one stutters)

The book *STone UTTERS (one stut-
ters)* is a limited edition handset
letterpress book designed by Phil
Baines in 1991. The text is a col-
lection of quotations referring to
the English type designer, John
Baskerville. The title of the book
is derived from a mis-reading of a

Fig no. 4:6 **Stone Cutters Piece featured in
YAK P. Baines**

title to a piece of work Baines did that was featured in *YAK*, that comprised a
collection of individual sheets that when pieced together, form one large
image [Fig no.4:6]. This piece of work contains the quote: 'I have no heroes,
only the stone cutters and silent scribes. I can make my own straight jacket.'
(Vanderlans, '91) In the setting there is a miss reading of the text to read 'One
stutters' from the text 'Stone Cutters' and this is where the name for the
book comes from.

Baines shares Baskerville's love of letters and it is appropriate that he should
produce a piece that merits the spirit of Baskerville himself and the contribu-
tion Baskerville made to the developments in design and typography. (Boag, '89
,p.24) John Baskerville of Birmingham devoted his life to raising the standards
of English printing. He spent seven years perfecting his type design
'Baskerville' and experimenting with printing techniques so that his type
design would benefit •8. He was an accomplished typographer, having an
understanding of the human qualities of type that enable it to communicate.
He believed that type should create visual interest and his type worked on
two levels, 'it worked and it looked good'. (Boag, '89 p26)

In Baines book *STone UTTERS*, there is one feature in his type that is obviously
influenced by manuscript writing. That is the forced line break, an early man-
uscript convention of
breaking words wherever
they coincided with the
end of a predetermined
measurement on the page
•9.

Fig no.4: 7 is a double page
spread from *Stone
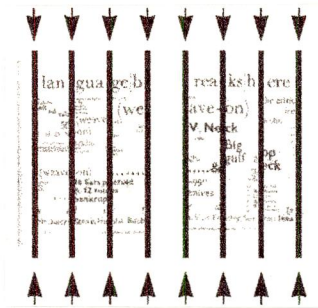UTTERS* which displays
the 'forced line break'.

Fig no. 4:7
***Stone UTTERS* book by P. Baines**

The pages are divided into three column grids, the type breaks at these divisions on the page; all type sizes and spacing conform to the vertical linearity of the page. All texts leave this area of the page vacant. At points where Baines does not intend the reader to join certain letters in the reading he uses a stroke to deliberately divide letters and interrupt reading. In the diagram the vertical rules indicate the linear lines that are the forced line break. [Fig no. 4:8]

Fig no. 4:8
diagram to illustrate line break grid

Baines used type size variations and interwoven lines of text, to create visual interest in the text. (Boag, '89 p.27) In Fig no. 4:9 the line "The general brilliance Baskerville's..." runs across the page beginning at either side of the margins of the page to create an obscure piecing together of letters forcing the reader to decode the text before entering the main body text. Baines plays with the word spacing to create obscure text imagery.
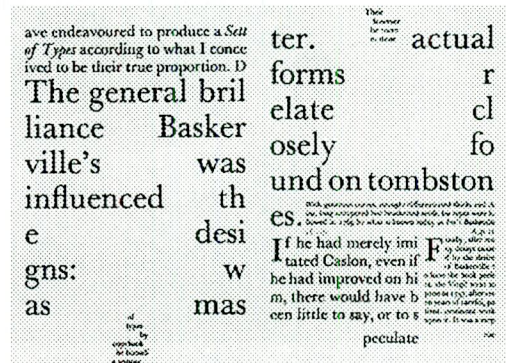
Fig no. 4:9 *STone UTTERS* **double page spread P. Baines**

Baskerville based his type design on the writing style taught by the English writing masters since the beginning of the eighteenth century. This is evident in his type design, along with the influence of copperplate and stone engraving letter forms. (Boag, '89,p.25) He developed techniques that retained and enhanced the qualities of his new type; ie. new ink, paper, presswork and hot pressing (ironing out the impression and giving the printed sheet an overall sheen). *STone UTTERS* extends the inscriptional theme which is an obvious connection between Baskerville's experiments with written and engraved letter forms. As Baskerville expresses in the preface of his edition of Paradise Lost (1758):

> Amongst the several mechanic arts that have engaged my
> attention, there is no one which I have pursued with so much
> steadiness and pleasure as that of Letter Founding. Having
> been an early admirer of the beauty of letters, I became

Book enthusiasts at the time
of Baskerville, claimed that
constant reading of his type
would blind his readers.
(Boag,'89 p.23)

It was compared to existing
typefaces as 'a hideous
abstraction,' as were
Bodoni, Futura, etc., when
they were first introduced
to the printed page.
(Baines '91)

Book enthusiasts at the time
of Baskerville, claimed that
constant reading of his type
would blind his readers.
(Boag,'89 p.23)
It was compared to existing
typefaces as 'a hideous
abstraction,' as were
Bodoni, Futura, etc., when
they were first introduced
to the printed page. (Baines,
'91)

insensibly desirous of contributing to the perfection of them.
(Boag, '89 p.24)•10

Baines uses the type to create visual interest in the book. He concentrates
more on the shape of the text on the page than the message; the pattern takes
priority over the content. David R. Olson writes in *Usable Texts* – assumptions
are made about the reader's linguistic knowledge and about the reader's
knowledge of the the possible word – that is the possible word the reader
will connect with when reading the sequence of text, in solving the
visual/textual puzzles in the book. (Duffy & Waller, Ed, '85 p.4) Baines is being a lit-
tle arrogant and self indulgent in his rendering of a book that is to reflect the
beauty of the letter form and the quality of 'Baskerville' typeface.•11

Frederic Goudy said that type had two tendencies: one, to be a separate inde-
pendent achievement; the other, to serve. Baines tries to merge both of these
independent tendencies in his type manipulations. He uses effects that are
arbitrary in arrangement and have the effect of altering and changing the
understanding of the author's written text. Therefore the text serve Baines
rather than the reader. (Poynor, '94 p.13) Baines feels his text usage creates
ambiguities by causing texts to collide or flow. The end message is entirely up
to the reader's deciphering of the book both in its visual and textual under-
standing, also by its unstructured delivery, which ignores the norms of formal
text setting. Boag suggests that Baines's altering of the meaning results in a
confusion between tracing the routes of text and losing the meaning which
becomes hidden and, therefore, lost. (Boag, '89 p.27)

026

Fig no. 4:10
Outsider Art
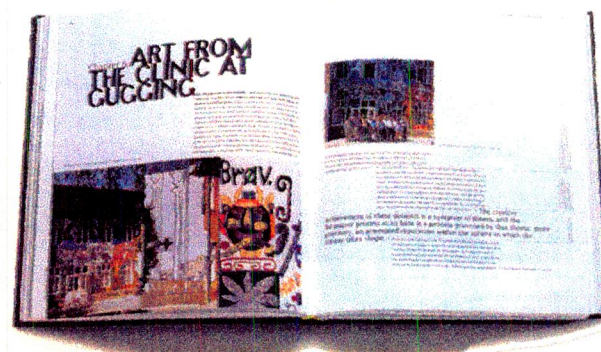
In his recent
design of the
book *Outsider Art* (1996), [Fig no. 4:10] which features the work of untrained
urban artists, Baines developed a freeform layout for the book, which never-
theless, conforms to strict specifications. His placement of images in relation
to the text and footnotes are relative to the text where they occur. Quotes
are set in larger point sizes and run across the page.

Baines' approach is not arbitrary but is a design response to how we read, the way the eye moves across the page. It questions some cherished conventions of book typography and Baines achieves his varied layouts without an obvious uniformity yet all conform to a grid and set of rules that govern the location and flow of all elements in the book. He achieves a random feel to the subject matter which is most appropriate to the content. Baines also developed his own font for the headlines in this book to illustrate the individuality of its contents. (Tom, '96 p 41)

Baines feels he is taking graphics as close to art as it can get. He wishes to combine visual interest with the communication of meaning. In his recent exhibition *Words Revealed*, Baines has worked with poet Catherine Byron to produce word images of her poetry. Baines explores the structure of texts and the reading process to visualise the work. (Baines, '96) Baines exploits the potential of type as an artist's medium for communication and visual expression. His published work has allowed him to explored some of the possibilities of type as an artist's medium. (Boag, '89, p.25) His success has encouraged him to continue and develop his work.

Beginning his life with a vocation for the priesthood, Baines has progressed to prove his true vocation lies in the art of typography and communication. Because of his religious background, he has developed an interest in detail and type form. Through the letterpress print process he can experiment within the constraints he prefers. Through his typographic experiments with his postcards and in his design of the typeface 'Can You?' Baines has questioned the boundaries of type and tradition. He encourages the type to indulge itself on the page, by using manuscript techniques. Baines creates a character in his work that is unique to him. His random layouts are in fact complex grid systems that ease the readers understanding of the imagery and content.

Massin – Drucker – Baines : compared

Massin – Drucker – Baines : compared

In this chapter I would like to examine the approaches to typographic language of Massin, Drucker and Baines in their typographic and printing practices. I will consider the similarities in each designer's work and how each of them interprets the tradition of typography and letterpress printing.

Massin created the book *La Cantatrice Chauve* at a developing time in the history of printing. He could alter the shapes of the type with the aid of photography to manipulate type and to exaggerate language in a visual form. This allowed Massin to write on flexible material (rubber) allowing it to be physically manipulated which gave him the opportunity to play with both the images and the type, bringing a visual acoustic element to the interpretation of Ionesco's play•¹². Massin was not content to use the tried and tested techniques of letterpress. He has always experimented with media in the printing world and the proof of that is his admission in *Print* '96 that he spends about ten hours a day in front of his Macintosh. He says that this does not result in him producing more or better design, only that the options are greater and more easily attained. (Gali & Bower, '96)

028

Massin's warped and stretched text disregarded the character of the letterform. Which should not be distorted by altering the type design itself or by bastardising it for the sake of content. However, Massin did invent a new understanding of typography. These distortions have made the type a literal image of the content and it becomes the criteria as opposed to the type being the vehicle of communication between author and reader.

Drucker's books, and in particular the *History of the / my wor(l)d* are interpretations of experiences and personal impressions / responses both in their literary content and their visual language. They are a true art form which do not conform to any pre-determined format or process. Drucker's influence as editor and printer is apparent in the juxtapositioning of imagery and narratives to convey the overall impression of the piece (I refer to the book as a piece, simply because it is not an academic book but a process of expression both literary and aesthetically) achieved through the letterpress process. By using letterpress and handsetting the type is that it gives her the ultimate control over her work by being in constant contact with it from the inception to the final completion. In some cases she has used the Macintosh to explore typographic possibilities before she set the type on the press.

In Drucker's book *A to Z* she has introduced differing sizes of text and substituted other typeface characters eg: zero for o and ! for i. She has also posi-

•12

Massin in his interpreta-
tion piece for Edith Piaf.
He used three dozen
condoms to created his
word distortions /
manipulations. He was
indeed very resourceful.
(Gali & Brower, '96)

tioned blocks of text to interact and read in more than one way. She has used
similar manuscript techniques similar to Baines, such as the large capitals that
become integral elements to the understanding of the text and completing
the message. She uses many sizes of type to convey more than one idea at the
same time eg. [Fig no. 5:1]

All characters merge together and convey the two words as a single word
image. She also uses different sizes of characters to stress the sound of the
word, in her book *26'76* she uses a capital 'L' to stress the heading of the
page.[Fig no. 5:2]

L... COMPARATIVE

pro $_{of}^{v}$ ing

Fig no. 5:1
Drucker A *to* Z

Fig no. 5:2
Drucker 26'76

In History of the / my wor(l)d Drucker delivers the text in clear obvious narra-
tives of text. Each has a distinct physical character and conforms either to
size, spatial arrangement or colour. All three are different in their size and
even in black and white the narratives are distinguishable. Their written char-
acter displays three personalities. The first narrative is loud and confident, the
second is a personal emotive private voice of Drucker, the third is the con-
scious - a reality of history, the underplayed realities and truths of given situa-
tions as they happened. Her delivery of the text is clear and defined within
her understanding of her personal situation and history. Of all the books I
found this one to read like a storybook with diagrams of understanding and
labels to aid that understanding. The text does not complete the task of using
the meaning of the text to dictate its arrangement. She has achieved these
requirements more successfully in her books *A to Z* and *26'76*.

Baines is a 'typo—Freak' (Boag, '89). He devoted much of his personal time dur-
ing his student days at St. Martin's to perfecting his work using the letter-
press process. His work has been very successful and he has gained much
respect for his type manipulations. Baines says:

> I see tradition as a living thing, an ongoing understanding of
> practicalities and conventions which each age must interpret
> as necessary, according to its own needs, learn and benefit
> from, and then pass on. It is not a static set of rules to be
> slavishly obeyed. (Baines, '92 p6)

Baines prefers to use the type to manipulate the reader's perception of type,
challenging the perceptions of reading, and this he achieves through his
unorthodox typesetting. He creates interesting patterned/textual type layouts

which do not reflect any of the the grey text of traditional book work. Baines says rules are there to be adapted and modified to suit the needs or mood of the time in which work is being created.

Baines has not entirely ignored the traditions of typography with his blocked text and his dislike for kerning (space between letters). Leading (space between lines of text) rules, such as 10pt text to sit on 12pt leading are ignored and 10pt type sits beside 60pt type. All have individual spacings both in their leading and kerning and it may appear to be devoid of any kind of uniformity. Perhaps Baines use of text is a extension of Massin's overlapping type in *La Cantatrice Chauve* when he layered varying sizes of type.

Baine's layouts are demanding visuals and contain literary puzzles that distract the attention of the reader and demand a visually educated audience. In his latest work – his exhibition pieces and most importantly his book, *Outsider Art* he has solved many of the teething problems apparent in his earlier work. This interaction seems to be a necessary ingredient in his work and appears to offer a solution to his visual language/experiments.

> The manipulation of words on the page was that it returned the written language to the specific place. (Drucker, '94 p46)

conclusion

...practioners who have a passionate interest in the word, but
believe it is better served by an expressive treatment.
(Baines, '92 p6)

In this thesis I have engaged in analysing visual language. Visual language can
be traced from hieroghyphs to the present day in the layouts of Massin,
Drucker and Baines. These designers represent a unique personal approach of
design towards this subject. Massin worked in design at the time of World
War Two and Drucker entered design in the '70s, when women's traditional
roles were being questioned and the emotional confusion and anxiety of the
Vietnam War that brought about the crises in masculinity. Baines, who grew
up in the country and after studying for the priesthood, then entered the
busy competitive environment of London's design world to which he has
devoted his time since.

Massin interpreted Ionesco's play, he introduced the individuality of each
character using the type and developed an intimacy between the type and the
character in the play. Drucker's fascination with the letterpress process has
encouraged her to work within its constraints and using these impositions
creates the complex poetic constructions. She displays a social consciousness
of her environment and her work. She supports her obtuse language with the
aid of advertising imagery, reminiscent of the '50s and placed in an unfamiliar
setting – extending the understanding of the text. Baines play with type size
and format have created seemingly random formats. His unconventional use
of leading suggests deliberate rule breaking approaches to typography. Baines
succeeds in breaking established rules of type and his success encourages him
to continue his type experiments and question the boundaries of type.

The three designers would see their work as very traditional but it is appar-
ent that each have a high regard for the letterform and of its communicative
quality to convey the message in typography. Each have taken an individual
approach to type and have succeeded in conveying meaning through the type.
They continue to produce type based work and to discover new approaches
to develop and communicate the essence of the content through their type
experiments. In this thesis I have illustrated the understanding of visual lan-
guage and highlighted three practioners who manipulate type to expose
/transpose its meaning to the receiver. All regard the letter as the most
important element on the page. Visual language is an attempt to enhance and
convey meaning, giving the content the space and textual environment to
communicate.

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