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**BOOK OF ABSTRACTS**

**POST-DIGITAL  
LETTERPRESS PRINTING**

A two-day international  
conference on traditional and  
innovative design practices  
using letterpress printing

Porto  
30 & 31 January 2020

[pdlp.fba.up.pt](http://pdlp.fba.up.pt)

# IMPRINT

## **Title**

Post-Digital Letterpress Printing  
Book of Abstracts

## **Edited by**

Ana Catarina Silva  
Pedro Amado  
Vitor Quelhas

## **Published by**

i2ADS – Research Institute in Art, Design  
and Society University of Porto, Faculty  
of Fine Arts

## **ISBN**

978-989-54703-0-3

## **Date**

January 2020

## **Design**

Eduardo Napoleão

## **Editorial Design**

Jorge Araújo

## **Typefaces**

Garibaldi & Malva Typefaces designed by  
Harbor Type

## **Original texts & images**

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## **Printed by**

Norcopia Casulo D'Imagens  
Print run: 100.



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## Acknowledgements

Jorge Morais (FBAUP)

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# FOREWORD

**ANA CATARINA SILVA, PEDRO AMADO, VÍTOR QUELHAS**  
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Welcome to the Post-Digital Letterpress Printing (PDLP) conference Book of Abstracts. A two-day international conference on traditional and innovative design practices using letterpress printing that took place on January 30 and 31<sup>st</sup>, at the Museum of the Faculty of Fine Arts of the University of Porto.

This conference aims to reflect on the current status of letterpress practice and research in the international context. In the last few years, we have been slowly witnessing the revival of this technology in Portugal, mainly due to the surging interest of the modern printers and typesetters — the current generation of graphic designers and visual artists. An interest, that follows the trend set in the last decade in other international contexts. As such, this conference gathers the researchers and practitioners of this traditional practice in the current post-digital editorial design contexts of the twenty-first century's activities and technologies.

It was organized by the i2ADS (Research Institute in Art, Design, and Society), and the ID+ (Research Institute for Design Media and Culture) and involved different national K12 and higher education institutions, namely the ESD (IPCA), ESMAD (IPP), EASR, ESE (IPP) and ESAD. Also, the involvement of a national nonprofit association ATIPO and the international partnership with the Univali University from Brazil. This was only possible through joint effort and the involvement of the organizers and volunteers in this event.

In this single-edition, mainly students, researchers and instructors have participated. Nevertheless, the involvement of the artists and professionals that maintain this practice alive was crucial. Many of these participants share both research and practice activities. During the contacts made to promote this event, we have confirmed that, albeit a defunct commercial production technique, letterpress in its different expressions — traditional, artistic, experimental, educational — is being explored in several different contexts. A testimony of this exploration is a very positive response to the call for submissions. We've received proposals from Brazil, England, France, India, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Russia, Spain, Sri Lanka, United States of America. Not only proposals for communications, but also for workshops and artworks exhibition. This somehow confirms that letterpress is still a very relevant and widespread activity in use today. Its practitioners vary their approaches ranging from commercial print services, to artistic and educational research.

This conference follows the format of previous similar research initiatives such as the Typography Meeting that takes place yearly in Portugal. Or the “Letterpress Printing: Past, Present, Future” that took place at the University of Leeds in 2018. And other showcase initiatives such as the “Imprimere”, a major Design exhibition and a massive catalog about the production of books, organized by ESAD in 2018. And more recently, the “Típo: um encontro de Impressores Tipográficos” that took place in October 2019, in the Azores.

This conference features not only the presentation of the communications by national and international researchers that resulted from a call for abstracts — we’ve accepted 17 proposals (70% acceptance rate) — around the three main topics of interest: letterpress history, education and practice.

Letterpress, being a traditional industry on the brink of disappearance in northern and central Portugal [to mention the national context as an example], has also been the object of funded research projects that aim to reflect on the methods, strategies, and challenges within the scope of restoring a craft-based local economy currently on the decline.

The research of historical technologies of reproduction that have lost their active practitioners and its interpretations in contemporary art and design practice go beyond the confined research on letterpress history and technology, and cross design and fine arts practices. These issues addressing engraving and other artistic practices promoting the engagement with the complexity of the material print culture present in nineteenth-century print production are also a part of the PDLF.

Digital fabrication and practice of traditional printing techniques that actively contribute to improving the pedagogy of graphic design and the practice of graphic design studios is the most common thread of discourse throughout the submissions to PDLF.

Within this scope, many authors analyze and propose hybrid methods using traditional and custom-built tools that explore the limits of this medium. From restoring old methods to emulating or exploring beyond the limits of new materials and digitally-enabled processes. These use commonly CNC milled, laser-cut, digital printed or plotted parts and matrices, computer-generated shapes and solutions, varied hard and software solutions. Usually, interpreting or restoring historical models such as modular type designs.

Hence, the educational and museological spaces provide the ground to rethink the creative and technological advances and the impact of the ubiquity of digital tools in our daily lives. Not only by the nature of the results of the digital tools in contrast to analog media but also, allow us to rethink the role of the designer in specific editorial contexts such as traditional editorial processes, self-publishing or independent publishing, among others. Experimental, collaborative and material approaches are key ingredients in these contexts in order to produce solutions of higher value. Including but not being limited exclusively to letterpress allow to transcend the printing process itself, highlighting several other key aspects in the editorial and graphic design process. This allows its practitioners to question

and explore the constraints of the physical nature of the medium and to experience the joy of the material process. As highlighted in this publication, these limitations actively promote the research of new thinking perspectives and printing aesthetics.

The discussion in this conference also includes studies on contemporary letterpress practice and how practitioners interact with technology in their ongoing work, along with the identification of an established reality of a creative community of practitioners.

Some approached the practical reality of the shortage of materials and tools, and the not yet sufficient contemporary alternatives as some of the reasons why so much of the production nowadays is led by nostalgia and has an overall feel of pastiche, making a statement for progress in letterpress practice.

Finally, as we have previously observed, being a complex technique it also promotes a collaborative approach. This also serves to strengthen communities in the process of finding and exploring resources and experimenting with new approaches. This confronts its practitioners and researchers with the dilemma of conserving the heritage of print in a traditional sense while exploring it and enhancing it with contemporary digital tools. And thus, challenging the role of the living, or working print museums, workshops, and educational institutions

These three topics are also explored by the three keynote presentations from Catherine Dixon (CSM / UAL); Amelia Fontanel (RIT / CGAC) & Richard Kegler (P22); Jorge dos Reis (FBAUL).

Catherine Dixon opens the PDLP conference by examining the history of the composition as a shared and often uncomfortable space of relationship with graphic design practice and education in the second half of the twentieth century in London. The value of this hands-on practice in establishing new alternative and experimental methods for teaching and the development of new design aesthetics. And how it rapidly proved its benefits and even extended to Portugal.

Amelia Fontanel and Richard Kegler follow the evolution of a typeface design over a century throughout different mediums and technologies since first being drawn in the early twentieth century. This continuous interest in type revival is provided by the innovative application of various technologies to the point that it is being traced back to twenty-first-century analog letterpress formats demonstrating that letterforms currently transcend the digital and material formats.

And finally, Jorge dos Reis closes the PDLP conference revisiting an extensive survey of letterforms conducted in the last twenty-five years. An analysis using the learnings drawn from the experience teaching and practicing traditional typography in England and in Portugal.

Alongside the conference program, there is an exhibition that features the [art] works of well-known contemporary references in the traditional letterpress field, such as Alan Kitching, David Armes or Jorge dos Reis to mention a few, from national and

international contexts, that explore the hybrid boundaries of the technological and artistic fields involved. We highlight the works of Richard Ardagh, Lucrezia Russo and Roberto Gamonal Arroyo that mix traditional lead and wood with laser-cut or CNC-milled matrices in modular or experimental compositions. These are works that reflect an artistic practice and active research into new or experimental processes. To the date of the writing of this foreword we've included: Ana Mariz, Andreu Balius, Ane Thon Knutsen, Casey McGarr, Christian Granados, David Armes, Joana Monteiro, Lars Amundsen, Lucrezia Russo, Melani de Luca & Jan-Villem [Mizdruk], Naomi Kent, Nick Loaring, O Homem do Saco, Paul Hardman, Quadratim Letterpress, Roberto Gamonal Arroyo, Rúben Dias [Tipografia Dias], Sally Hope & Hannah Byles, Tim Hopkins, and Tipografia Vianense.

A curious and already expected outcome of this conference is the realization that a very significant group of practitioners is already exploring twenty-first-century digital fabrication technologies within the editorial production.

Also worth mentioning are the workshops. We've received several proposals to host workshops in traditional and hybrid techniques and included four in our conference program. Recovering historical production techniques: Gillotage, a workshop dedicated to the technological reconstruction a mid-nineteenth century relief printing technique developed to be combined with letterpress printing. Using modular printing systems: SuperVeloz, a workshop commemorating the centenary of Joan Trochut, the author of the Super Tipo Veloz typographic system, using a selection of modules cut with laser in methacrylate; and P22 Blox printing system, a set of modular letterpress printing blocks made from plastic that allow for a wide variety of lettering, experimental letterforms and pattern making. And the exploration of visual illustrations for an editorial design using typographic techniques: Letterpress and almost-revolutions, textual manifestos expressed through visual letterpress experimentation, celebrating the October 31 revolution date in Portugal.

As a closing remark, we'd like to thank all the authors, artists, participants, invited speakers, workshop instructors, and the members of the Program Committee and Organising Committee that helped to make this edition possible. We would also like to express our gratitude for the generous financial support from P22 Type Foundry, as well as from the FCT and UP grant support. A special thank you to EASR, ESE. A special thanks to the ATIPO, for promoting the organization of this conference. We hope you enjoy this conference and that this establishes the grounds for future similar events that explore and push this field even further.

Porto, January 2020

The PDLP Executive Committee

# KEYNOTES

## CATHERINE DIXON

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It is easy to romanticize letterpress and to mythologize its history as we, as contemporary designers, would like to think it happened. Yet the reality of the craft of the composition of printed textual matter is that, as a trade, it shared an often uncomfortable relationship with graphic design practice as it began to take shape in the second half of the twentieth century.

This became all too clear when investigating the history of the composing room at my own institution. As a study, it surfaced some unexpected twists and turns in the story of the use of letterpress within the context of the education of a designer and acknowledges a debt owed by a current generation of teachers and students to their predecessors. Some 65 years before it was they who had negotiated the fiercely protected teaching territories of trade typography and printing, in order to allow design teachers and students an opportunity to access letterpress and work with type in a hands-on way.

This presentation will explore the impact of the trade orthodoxies in keeping design students out of the composing room, and the particular demarcation of typographic practices based on production. It will also highlight the contributions of key figures who challenged these orthodoxies. In 1952 the designer Anthony Froshaug managed to creatively negotiate the timetable at the Central School in London in order to gain access to a printing press, and set-up a hands-on evening class for designers in experimental letterpress printing (1952–6) run by the designer Ed Wright. Students such as Ken Garland and Germano Facetti were quick to recognize the value in this new teaching strategy and word quickly spread through their design networks of its benefits. In 1958 the designer Romek Marber arrived to teach at St Martin's and set up a letterpress teaching facility with the help of printers Desmond and Libertad Jeffery to similarly equip design students with first-hand experience of working with type.

I will argue that in challenging the existing trade orthodoxies these educational pioneers used letterpress to establish an alternative model for the typographic training of a designer and that this model quite considerably predates current exemplars of post-digital hands-on learning. I will also show how the ramifications of this pioneering work extended even to Portugal in the early 1970s through the practice of emigré designer Robin Fior. In conclusion, this presentation will reflect on the lessons to be learned from a better understanding of historical practice in the invigoration and re-imagination of the possibilities for contemporary practice.

# THE SEVEN LIVES OF A TYPEFACE

**RICHARD KEGLER, AMELIA FONTANEL**

**P22 Type Foundry, RIT Cary Graphic Arts Collection)**

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As we browse the font menu of any digital application, we become acutely aware that the past's typographic designs have become the fodder for a myriad of typographic digital expression. That a vast number of these typefaces originated as analog letterpress type impacts all 21st century typographers, from the experts to the amateurs. This presentation will follow the evolution of one such typeface design over a century. The decorative Cloister Initials, first drawn by American type designer Frederic W. Goudy in 1917, has been able to remain "in print" through the innovative application of various technologies. The speakers will trace the various permutations of Cloister Initials: from its beginning as a metal typeface, through digital versions, and back into physical forms that allow for multiple approaches to printing via letterpress. Illustrations of rare archival material from the RIT Cary Graphic Arts Collection, a leading American typographic library, will provide the historical context to the first analog "lives" of Cloister Initials. P22 Type Foundry will follow the typeface's subsequent arc in the last 30 years, as this design metamorphosed from early vector art to a robust digital font. The most surprising twist in Cloister Initials' tale has been the recent incarnations as 21st century analog formats, such as laser cut, polymer, and 3D-printed blocks, only made possible by computer-aided design technologies. As such Cloister Initials is the embodiment of post-digital letterpress: discarding the binary notion of analog vs. digital type—proving it is possible to exist as multiple formats in our age.

# THE STANDING LETTERS

**JORGE DOS REIS**

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Three extensive and historical letterpress surveys and archive projects in two countries. Observed and considered after twenty-five years have passed.

The first, "Peregrinação para um Alfabeto" took place from 1995 to 1996, in Lisbon, at the Tipografia Freitas Brito, in the composition sector.

The second, "Typographic Thoughts", took place from 1996 to 1997, in Norwich at the Typography Workshop of the Norwich School of Art and Design. And at the John Jarrold Printing Museum.

And finally, the third, "The Character of Typographic Characters", took place from 1997 to 1998, in Tomar, at the Typographic Workshop of the Instituto Politécnico de Tomar.

We are now celebrating twenty-five years after the moment when, due to a formative and professional need, I have decided to pursue formal training, by becoming a typography apprentice of composition in Rua do Ferragial, at Cais do Sodré in Lisbon, in the Tipografia Freitas Brito.

Following this stimulus arose a very personal desire to record, print and archive the typographic characters that were available in this typography by printing specimens in a manual flatbed proof press of relatively good quality, in an ethnographic attitude.

After this first opportunity in Lisbon, a period of residence in the United Kingdom has followed. First, in the city of London. And afterward, in the city of Norwich. Here it was possible to study and print the typographic spoils of the Norwich School of Art and Design typography room and of the John Jarrold Printing Museum.

Later, on my return to Portugal, during the two years that I was a letterpress teacher at the Instituto Politécnico de Tomar, I have made an extensive and almost monographic record of the lead material in the typographic composition workshop where I taught.

These three contributions dated in time complement each other and, together, take the form of a comprehensive teaching and practice universe of typographic composition with letterpress movable characters.

## COMMUNICATIONS

# SUPER TIPO VELOZ: FROM LETTERPRESS TO SCREEN. LEARNING FROM A MODULAR TYPE SYSTEM

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*Keywords: Type design, Typography, Modular type, Type workshop, Letterpress.*

## ABSTRACT

Super Tipo Veloz was a modern-conceived type system created by catalan printer and typographer Joan Trochut in the late 1930's as a tool to improve visual graphics in small commercial printed matter such as letterheads, logo design, dropcaps, custom lettering and other typographical works.

It was based on a concept of modularity where the idea of type composition was shifted into the idea of type design. Each character was a glyph, a single component of a letter rather than a complete letter in itself, which could be combined with other characters to produce custom-built letterforms, even illustrations and ornaments. In some way, Super Tipo Veloz pushed Gutenberg's movable type onto a new level.

Our hypothesis of work is based on the question: How this modular could be a useful and understandable method for a comprehensive introduction to type design.

As a tool based on modular shapes we find it as an engaging playground tool for students in the practice of type design. Building letterforms from some of the basic modules of SuperVeloz and other components from its type collection makes it easy to understand the basics of type design and understanding the alphabet as a system.

Working with students has demonstrated that creating letters from the collection of Super Tipo Veloz modules helps them to understand how parts of letters are related to each other and how designing an alphabet is a process of combining shapes consistently. Concepts such as proportions, contrast, modularity, counterforms, spacing and the basics of type anatomy can easily be achieved while building up lettershapes.



Nowadays, there are very few collections of SuperVeloz still available in letterpress workshops. A digital version was designed in 2004 for desktop *printing*. *Other experiences* has turned this modular system into stencilled devices or rubber stamps for inking and imprinting on a surface. Also, a more contemporary use of Super Tipo Veloz in Motion Graphic workshops has turned this dynamic system into a kinetic typographical experience.

The presentation deals briefly with the historical context where Super Tipo Veloz was created and introduces the basic features of this modular type system. It exposes the different workshop experiences that has been made both using the original SuperVeloz movable type on letterpress and the digitized version online ([supervelo.net](http://supervelo.net)). Methodologies used vary from the diversity of *workshops and approaches to Super Tipo Veloz*.

From our research and practical workshop experiences, we can conclude that Super Tipo Veloz is a useful tool for educational purposes that links traditional movable type concepts into digital type design with challenging results.

# A DIGITAL TYPEFACE FOR THE REIMAGINED FIELD OF POST-DIGITAL LETTERPRESS PRINTING

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*Keywords: Letterpress, Type design, Digital fonts, Photopolymer plates, Typography*

## GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Letterpress printing has been experiencing a resurgence driven by a new generation of printers who are reimagining the field. Yet we are not observing a proportionate effort from the type design community to supply digital fonts adequate for this new market.

In his book, *Printing Digital Type*, Gerald Lange dedicates a whole chapter to considering how, why, and when digital type works when printed on a hand-operated flatbed press—and when it doesn't. As he states, "Typefaces designed for the digital environment, which has an inordinate amount of technical demands, are not necessarily going to translate well on the letterpress page" (Lange, 2018, p. 75).

To address the growing need for digital fonts adequate for the demands of post-digital letterpress printing, we have developed a typeface design which is flexible enough to be used across a wide range of sizes and applications.

## PROBLEMATIC

Typefaces can be designed with various media applications in mind. Since John Baskerville's historic 18th-century innovations in typeface design and paper and ink technologies, metal fonts started to be printed on flatter surfaces and in an increasingly precise way (Chapell & Bringhurst, 1999). Indeed, in the introduction to his iconic book *American Metal Typefaces of the Twentieth Century* (1993), McGrew characterizes the typeface impression of ink on paper today as "essentially two dimensional."

Fast forward to the twenty-first century, we're seeing digital typefaces printed in a three-dimensional debossed way. Innovation and the use of flexographic photopolymer plates has facilitated production and invited a new generation of printers to start

transforming the design and aesthetics of contemporary letterpress. Today, letterpress is used largely for print posters, cards, covers, and broadsides—pieces that require thicker papers compared to longtime traditional applications like high-quality books.

This shift in application was followed by a change in the desired depth of impression. The light “kiss” impression has traditionally been the best practice in printing with metal and wood type, especially among the book arts community. Now, hard impression—also known as “deep” or “bite” impression—done on thicker paper with photopolymer plates without the risk of damaging irreplaceable type-sorts, has become more popular among a new generation of designers and printers.

As appreciation for three-dimensional deep impression printing has spread, so has the need for digital fonts, which can withstand these new technical conditions. The strong pressure, especially on thick soft papers, can make the ink spread significantly. It might fill white spaces irregularly and can distort original designs. In addition, the third dimension creates new areas of light and shadow inside and around the letterforms. With all of these effects, many of the new digital typefaces can have their features distorted and blurred.

Meanwhile, reproduction technologies have evolved to translate type designs into flat surfaces. Nearly all obstacles between the design of the type and its final appearance in texts on paper or screen have now been removed (Unger, 2018, p. 90). Typefaces are largely designed on screen and often read on screen. Designing for screens has therefore become the main requirement for typeface designers since 2014 (Unger, 2018, p. 99).

Yet the incredible evolution in type design tools, formats, and software—like variable fonts—has provided opportunities for its users to generate new typefaces that can function across a wider variety of outputs.

## METHODOLOGY

To address these problems, we turned to experimental research while developing an original digital typeface. Our methodology began with a literature review, followed by the generation of sketches, prototypes, and tests to help understand and address the design problems identified through our review process and observations in the field.

To date, we have developed an extensive practice: printing on metal and photopolymer plates in both platten and flatbed presses; in diverse studio settings, including two educational institutions; and privately owned letterpress studios in the United States.

We have gathered a significant amount of print samples and information on traditional and contemporary practices in the United States, and we have built the necessary knowledge and analytical skills to formulate the hypotheses and generate the briefings that are guiding our design exploration.

# INITIAL CONCLUSIONS AND CONTRIBUTION

The main features of our new typeface design are: big x-height and open counters; semi-condensed proportions; soft, slightly modulated strokes; and simple endings and clear joints. The result is an approachable, friendly, informal yet sturdy sans serif. Inspired by the new uses of letterpress printing, it retains its main features and attractiveness across a range of sizes and applications beyond letterpress. It is expressive enough for titles, and it is still legible and pleasant in short paragraphs with point size as small as 6pt.

Throughout our process we have been generating proofs in letterpress presses like the Vandercook 219 and using different types of papers, inks, and typographical settings. We generated tests of sizes, trackings, and design samples for a range of weights.

We are currently at the point of finalizing the production of masters for an axis of weights. We ultimately plan to develop variations for optical sizes and applications (e.g., screen to deep impression).

In a broader scope, we intend to share the research and design behind this font in order to contribute to an international conversation about the future of type design for digital and letterpress applications.

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# THE POST-DIGITAL LETTERPRESS PRINT EXCHANGE: METHODOLOGICAL INNOVATION IN THE EXPLORATION OF CONTEMPORARY LETTERPRESS PRACTICE

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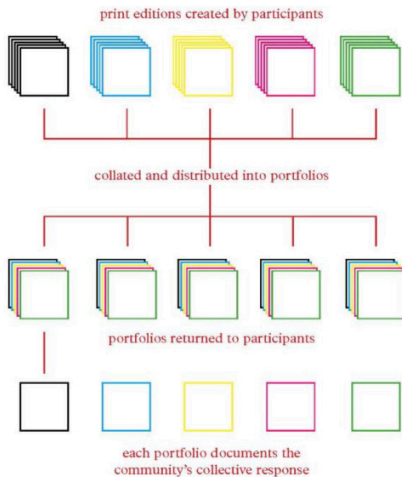
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*Keywords: post-digital, letterpress, exchange, creative practice, technology*

## INTRODUCTION

This abstract introduces the 'print exchange' as a research method bridging practice-based research and methods of data collection. A print exchange invites participants to submit an edition of original prints to be distributed among all practitioners taking part (Fig. 1). The Exchange contextualises individual work within a broader community of practice and study the phenomenon of digital technologies being integrated into traditional letterpress practice.



*Fig. 1 Diagram of the Print Exchange Model.*

## GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The Post-digital Letterpress Print Exchange (PDLPX) was initiated within the context of an ongoing doctoral research project which explores post-digital letterpress practice. Having completed semi-structured interviews with letterpress printers and developed a reflective practice portfolio of printed artwork, the researcher became aware of a need to gain an improved understanding of letterpress practitioners' use of technology within individual practice. This imperative led the researcher to co-opt the established model of a print exchange to undertake a survey of practitioners; collecting insights into their creative practice, motivations and perception of value presented by analogue and digital technologies.

## PROPOSITION

In the course of *studying the phenomenon of* digital technology being integrated into letterpress practice, the researcher came to label this activity 'post-digital letterpress'. The increased popularity of letterpress printing and printed artefacts is a cultural trend that belies a greater movement of post-digital activity and values. A combination of digital fatigue, creative experimentation, technological appropriation and reappraisal of traditional production has coalesced to form contemporary communities of practitioners who place equal value on the digital and analogue technologies once divided by a perceived dichotomy of old and new, digital and analogue.

The PDLPX represents practice-based qualitative design research. Approaching the project as a researcher-practitioner (Drake & Heath, 2011, p. 33) enabled the researcher to identify the print exchange model and then apply it as an affective instrument of data collection. The research was undertaken using a practice lens to examine how practitioners interact with technology in their ongoing practices (Orlikowski, 2000, p. 404). Acting as a survey of post-digital letterpress practice, the artworks and questionnaire responses produced by participants provided a corpus of data that was analysed using constructivist grounded theory to support the researcher's enquiry into the phenomenon of digital and analogue technology being employed within letterpress practice (Charmaz, 2008).

## METHODOLOGY

The researcher launched The PDLPX at Letterpress Workers 2017 (LPW). The Exchange included a questionnaire along with the call for printed artwork, presenting practitioners with an established and familiar method of collaboration. The post-digital letterpress theme of the exchange was posited in the form of open questions, which were intended to inspire participants in their conception of printed designs and direct their responses. Practitioners who create original printed artwork using both traditional and digital technologies were invited to take part in the exchange. Among the invitees were artists, designers and printers who all employ letterpress as a primary aspect of their practice.

The Exchange was designed to document the digital and analogue technologies being used by contemporary letterpress practitioners and further understanding of how these technologies are being used within creative practice. A range of rich data was collected, in the form of written responses from practitioners and printed artwork, conceived and produced using the medium and techniques being studied. Grounded theory analysis (Glaser, 1992) of the questionnaire responses and printed artworks enabled the researcher to explore practitioners' motivations in employing and integrating these technologies. The motivation of letterpress practitioners, the technologies they employ and the value they perceive in engaging in their practice was analysed using grounded theory to thematically code the corpus of data collected by The Exchange.

Grounded theory enabled theory to emerge from the data, informing understanding of creative practice (Glaser, 1978; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The exchange portfolios are artefacts that document the collective creativity, skill and personal motivations shared by a community of practice. Constructivist grounded theory was employed to elicit meaning through analysis of the questionnaire responses and printed artworks through constant comparison among the data. This process was advanced to interpret findings through comparison of emergent codes and categories (Mills, 2006).

Twelve participants submitted editions (Fig. 2) of 30 prints and completed questionnaires.



Fig. 2 A portfolio of prints from *The Post-digital Letterpress Print Exchange 2017*

The emergent findings from the grounded theory analysis have focused around the following areas:

- ☛ The use of technologies in letterpress to construct a design.
- ☛ The design process being facilitated through letterpress techniques.
- ☛ The creative constraints presented by letterpress as a catalyst for creative practice.



## RESULTS AND CONCLUSION

The exchange was successful in collecting a diverse range of printed responses on the theme of post-digital letterpress (Fig. 3). The researcher was able to identify and be granted access to a community of practitioners with approaches to letterpress that were relevant to the study by becoming established as a researcher-practitioner within the creative community. Operating from this privileged position grants the researcher expert knowledge and personal insight into the subject area. However, this advantageous position must be considered during analysis to mitigate the influence the impact of unconscious bias from the researcher, as they study practitioners and techniques to which they are personally invested.

Organisation of the exchange required many hours of development, demanding considerable effort over the 6-month period in which the research activity was being managed. Analysing the responses through coding of both textual and visual data also proved time consuming and required methodological innovation in the application of grounded theory across multiple data types. The generation of grounded theory using the data collected by The PDLPX is ongoing and due for publication in 2020. Future studies could make further use of the exchange method to access communities of practice and record data relating to arts, design and craft practice.



Fig. 3 A portfolio from The Post-digital Letterpress Exchange.

## CONTRIBUTION

This example of explicit post-digital letterpress research explores contemporary letterpress practice. The exchange format presents an innovative method for engaging with practitioners to gather data and insights. The project aligns with the conference theme and topic of interest: 'Letterpress practice.' The findings from analysis of The Exchange contribute towards an improved understanding of the relationship between technology and creative practice, as demonstrated by post-digital letterpress.

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# ORLANDO ERASTO PORTELA: RELATIONS BETWEEN CREATIVE PROCESS AND LETTERPRESS PRINTING METHODS OF AN (ALMOST) UNKNOWN DESIGNER FROM MID TWENTIETH CENTURY

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*Keywords: Orlando Erasto Portela, Confiança, Letterpress workshop,  
Zinc engravings, Movable type*

## INTRODUCTION

Orlando Erasto Portela was born in Porto in 1930. Self-taught from an early age and without any training in the artistic field, he began his professional life at about ten years old, after completing the fourth year in the educational system, starting working as an illustrator at the Litografia Pátria in Porto. It was here that Erasto, the name by which he then signed his work, began to design graphic motifs for packaging and product labels from a range of industries predominantly located in northern Portugal, including Ach. Brito, in Porto, and the Saboaria e Perfumaria Confiança, in Braga, among many others. Often his work has extended to the choice of oral brand names (words) whose typography he has worked in a personalized way, giving it a distinctive character in its graphic appearance, in combination with the chosen motifs.

Around 1954, Erasto moved to Braga to work at the then recently opened Litografia Minho. Twelve years later he moved to Guimarães to work as an illustrator at Competidora de Representações, Fernando Penafort's label-producing company, having worked for a wide range of clients. Later, in 1970, he started working, as an illustrator, at Plásticos Xavier in Guimarães. He retired in the early 1990s, moving back to Porto. Although he continued to work as an independent illustrator, the work he carried out after his retirement was timely.

Throughout his life, he travelled essentially through Spain and the Netherlands, although it was not possible to know the influence of these trips on his artistic production. Before the proliferation of Internet use, Erasto collected numerous clippings with photographs taken from newspapers and magazines, which he organized by themes in

archive folders ("faces", "hands", "birds", "fish", among many others) and which they served as useful material for their graphic creations. His greatest artistic influence came from Cinema, which consumed eagerly on an almost daily basis, and was a frequent visitor to Cinema do Terço, in Porto. He died in Porto in 2001 at the age of 71.

This presentation focuses on the work produced by Erasto throughout his life, with a special focus on the work produced between the 1950s and 1970s for Saboaria e Perfumaria Confiança. This need for focus is justified by the fact that Erasto was involved in the process of setting up the internal letterpress workshop at Confiança, as part of a series of major investments in the industrial park and the expansion of the factory premises. The installation of the internal letterpress workshop aimed to reduce the dependence of external suppliers on the level of production of labels and packaging by Confiança.

For the letterpress workshop, over two years, various printing, cutting and creasing machines were purchased. The Heidelberg cylindrical printing machine was the third to arrive in Portugal (after the first was bought by the newspaper *Diário de Notícias*, in Lisbon, and the second by the newspaper *O Comércio do Porto*, in Porto). Two other Heidelberg "flat to flat" printing presses were also acquired. In addition to the typography and cartoning machines, Confiança's letterpress workshop has acquired a collection of types, blades, strips and clichés, all of which are distributed in 61 typographic boxes, purchased from foreign foundries (from Spain and the Netherlands). These elements are identified in a 1958 typographic catalogue published for internal use.

In addition to printing presses and the typewriter collection, Confiança has also purchased a Johne Perfecta guillotine machine, a J. Sandt AG shearing press, a shredder, a dry relief machine, a hand-held engraving and cutting press and a gilding machine. The letterpress workshop is complemented by a carton section consisting of six machines: an Aug. Kolbus Rahden (acquired in 1958), a creasing machine, two singing machines, a creasing machine and a card guillotine. It should be noted that, until 1950, Confiança had only a single manual printing machine, thus demonstrating the strong investment of the factory in the installation of its internal letterpress workshop.

When completed, the letterpress workshop allowed the almost complete execution of the numerous labelling jobs consumed by Confiança. However, some labels, notably those produced with the largest number of colours, continued to be produced by external lithograph printers of Porto and later of Braga with the opening of the Litografia Minho (where Orlando Erasto Portela had meanwhile moved). At Confiança's internal letterpress workshop, three printers (all of them male) worked simultaneously. It is in this workshop that the printers performed the numerous graphic works developed by Erasto. The graphic assets resulting from his creative process resulted in numerous zinc prints (for custom designs) in combination with the 61 types purchased, which are currently deposited at the Confiança's current facilities.

Many of the graphic motifs developed by Erasto several decades ago continue to be commercially explored in products currently produced by the factory in Braga. Confiança continues to use on its labels and packaging the same graphic motifs (and sometimes some printing processes) produced in the mid-twentieth century. This fact, closely linked to the recent trends of packaging revaluation of this time, has made Confiança's products exponentially valued in recent years through the symbolism transmitted visually by their packaging. This communication will also include an analysis of the longevity of Erasto's work today, showing examples of works produced between 1950 and 1970 that can still be purchased in certain shops, offering a reflection on the relationship between the creative process and letterpress printing methods.

# GILLOTAGE. EXPLORING A MID-NINETEENTH CENTURY RELIEF PRINTING TECHNIQUE

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*Keywords: Gillotage, Technological reconstruction, Printmaking, Transfer paper*

## INTRODUCTION

Gillotage, a relief printing method used in XIX century commercial industry, owes its name to the inventor Firmin Gillo. It consists in the use of a lithographic transfer of the image drawn and processed into the stone, to the metal plate, while avoiding the undercutting of the raised areas of the design needed to obtain a relief printing plate. With this characteristics, gillotage was a first option when it came to reproduce an illustration in a commercial sphere being a cheaper alternative to relief printing methods such as wood engraving. This article describes the technological reconstruction of the methods used in gillotage. Our aim wrestles with a fundamental problem: is it possible to recreate the material conditions, interpretations and successful printing outcomes as present in original gillotages? How to contend with the unfortunate demands of new and unfamiliar technologies of reproduction and adapt them to a modern practice? Can a project based in an obsolete printing technique demonstrate why to engage researchers, students, in new approaches to explore historical printing techniques? Can it help to reintroduce methods, materials, developed within the reproductive commercial industry in innovative design practices combining its use with letterpress printing?

To better understand the materials and components of gillotage, we reviewed manuals and descriptions on the process., knowing, the aesthetic and tactile qualities produced by these methods at their best, have not been used in printmaking studio. Therefore, research for this paper forms an experiment in reconstructing procedures hitherto not adopted in such workshop conditions. Nevertheless, such operational circumstances may thus be understood as an invitation to experiment, contradicting the original use of making of a print as means to reproduce. Although we aim to get closer to an alternative printing matrix compatible with letterpress printing, developing innovative research approach, one that may invite print practitioners not only to read a rich history of printing, but also to explore and investigate such materials and processes in a creative practice becomes a

priority. Such findings, giving continuity to earlier research conducted within Pure print / i2ads, foster the sharing of expertise across design and fine arts practices, promoting the engagement with the complexity of the material print culture present in XIX century print production.

# NONSENSE POETRY BOOK

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*Keywords: Poem Process. Typographic book. Nonsense. Letterpress. Angela Lago*

The present work exposes the development and result of a proposal of the first half of 2017, consisting of an extracurricular activity, with the format of an extension project in the Typographic Workshop of Anhembi University, with the objective of developing a typographic book, in the second semester of 2017 to 2018, with students of Graphic Design. The work was planned from an unpublished text by award-winning writer and illustrator Angela Lago, who suggested a nonsense language (expressed by the poetic genre limerique). The theme for the poem was the universe of Typography, settings, anatomy, classifications and the box-high and box-low dichotomy, subjects that had already been addressed in the disciplines of Typography 1, 2 and 3. In step 1, we studied the origin of the letter and the history of writing; in step 2, fundamentals, nomenclatures and anatomy and, in step 3, development of a typographic project, from design to the construction of the digital source.

For the methodological foundation of the project, an experimental empirical approach was taken, in which students were encouraged to experience the particularities of typographic printing in a practical but directed way. Thus, the project was divided into three phases: Understanding, Creation and Production.

In the first phase, the students had contact with the text, the author's work and the typographic collection of the workshop. The text was composed of limeriques, short poems, humorous, structured in five verses that begin and end with interrelated rhymes. From brainstorming sessions with students, a better understanding of the formal structure of the poem and the conceptual approach that should be adopted for the project was sought. In addition to the work of Angela Lago, the students were presented to productions of different poets, such as the Catalan Joan Brossa, the Brazilians of the process poetry Wladimir Dias-Pino, Moacyr Cirne, Neide de Sá, Álvaro de Sá and also to the works of Augusto de Campos and Julio Plaza. Thus, as a layout strategy, we sought to emphasize the graphical expressiveness of the types of letters available in the typographic workshop of the university. In the next stage, the students were divided into pairs for morning, afternoon and evening periods for the creation lab, in which they researched the materials of the workshop collection such as between the lines, types with and without



serif, produced different alternatives through sketches, and discussed each alternative for the pages and cover, together with teacher and author, to define, democratically, the most coherent suggestion to the theme.

After this step, we checked with the groups of morning, afternoon and night shifts to align the layouts, identify technical problems such as characters that have descendants and/or ascendants, the mounting of the branches within the page frame, the reassessment of the initial studies compared to the final stage, which always surprised the group for two reasons: the visual beauty of the branch and the final printing. This materiality of the type and printing process made students better understand typographic particularities, such as the physical differences of mobile types, the logical reasoning of spaces, alignments, the particularities of assemblies and analog technology.

In the digital composition stage, developed in inDesign, such as the technical data sheet and the colophon, with the Niks font, donated exclusively to the project by Eudilson Coan, the students followed up to the production of clichés.

In all routes of development, pre-production and production of branches and pages, the layouts were adjusted to enable better distribution and composition within the page, including the stages of construction of the monotyping matrix and the pasture for the assembly of the cover with layers of paper in different colors. At this stage, I proposed to students to collect all the shavings and leftovers of paper to assemble a special composition for the cover, with textures and different heights. At first, the process did not result the way we wanted it to, and we gradually discovered a systematization from the errors: first, compose the layout with the trimmings without pasting, evaluate and validate with the pairs; then the procedure was to create a production line, glue with the foam roll in small areas; the next step was the composition with the trimmings and, with this dynamic, the students concluded with a satisfactory quality. The entire technical path, with the physical differences of the mobile types and the logical reasoning of the spaces, assemblies, alignments and the slow and complex response of the typographic analog system was the one that most interfered in the stimulus and empathy of the students during the period of one year of the project production.

During the assembly and printing process, a workshop was given on the rescue and printing in EVA, with Prof. Rafael Neder and a lecture with Prof. Diego Maldonado on the digital source drawing. The process of pre and post printing of the book had the assistance and execution of the printer José Carlos Gianotti, during which the students followed the final decisions between the layout, the mounted branch, the assembly of the matrix board and the imposition of the pages, that were printed at Vandercook and Catu.

In the imposition stage of the pages, composing the core and cover, plan the finish, the stitching, triple refile, the dynamics of interaction with the sewing workshop of the Fashion course was fundamental. Technical teacher Nereu Zulai made several tests of

line thicknesses and finishing, at this stage the students helped in the over-shavings of the threads and the seam knot, giving a unique personality with irregular refles and unfinished stitching.

As expected results, the proposal made it possible to give exclusive form to a book of nonsense and irreverent poems, to involve students in the basic rules of the analog and systematic process, while opposing it to the digital system, exploring these limits by proposing dialogues with the basic rules of design (alignment, readability and hierarchy), dialogue with the issues that contribute to the critical sense and the formation of thinking design and doing design. All this practice was based on bibliographic references and experiences with professionals, technicians, companies and manufacturers of the typographic and paper industry that supported and contributed to production and completion.

# PRINTING PRACTICE

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## INTRODUCTION

The point of the presentation is to present The Book Art Museum in Łódź as a place to inspire the artists of books as well as typographic workshop support for artists, students, bibliophiles, and designers. MKA was established in 1993. It was created by Janusz, Jadwiga and Paweł Tryzno. MKA is located in the Henryk Grohman's Villa. The factory owner organized exhibitions and collected a representative collection of European graphic art from the interwar period. The collection consists of printing, paper making or bookbinding devices. MKA has also a collection of printing presses of different kinds and a collection of casting molds and types, which was bought from inherits of the Warsaw Type Foundry P.P. in 1996. Students, artists, designers, and visitors are able to create books, prints, installations and others based on Gutenberg's techniques. The second part of the presentation will focus on selected examples of own practice in a typographic workshop and collective exchange that maintain the unusual vibe and mood of the place. Discussing selected projects created at MKA, including the project of digitization of the 1918 Brygada typeface, the books published by the independent publishing house Wypierdalaj, or educational activities of Distort Visual collective, we will consider the transformation of typographic printing and its current application. Getting to know the workshop and learning the technique of classical typographic composition holds the relation master and student. The owner of MKA, Janusz Tryzno, transfers his knowledge and shares experience with trainees through professional activity. The Distort Visual collective was founded by [author(s) identification redacted by program chairs] at MKA in 2012. Since then, the collective's duties, apart from graphic work and artistic projects, have been to take care of and maintain typographic printing techniques in use. As part of the collective's activities, they conduct workshops and meetings on the history of printing and its contemporary questions. The workshops are attended by artists, designers, and students who create cooperative projects of books, zines, posters, and graphics. The physical limitations of composition technology lead to experiments and the search for new perspectives as well as new aesthetics of printing based on the unconventional way of thinking.

# RESISTING HYPER-DIGITALISATION: THE RE-APPROPRIATION OF THE PRINTED OBJECT IN CONTEMPORARY DESIGN

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*Keywords: Digital Fabrication, Printmaking, DIY, Post-Digital Era, Design Education*

## INTRODUCTION

This project aims to explore how digital fabrication can progress pedagogy and practice of traditional printing techniques within the context of contemporary graphic design.

We suggest using 3d printing, laser cutting, and plotting to create artefacts to be used in (but not limited to) letterpress, stencil, silkscreen, and monotype printing.

Furthermore, this research aims to develop an unorthodox approach to pedagogy, empowering future graphic designers through the self-production of tools.

To this end, we will discuss how this approach can exist within the framework of formal educational institutions, and in daily professional practice.

How can an academic institution be prepared for an ever-changing communication design environment, while also underlying the relevance of traditional techniques in contemporary design? Considering the limitations of materials, equipment, and space within an educational institution, how can digital fabrication contribute to improve the pedagogy of graphic design?

Do It Yourself (DIY), and Open Source culture provide valid methodologies on how this can be achieved. Both propose emancipatory practices building communities that are auto-didactic and auto-productive. Today we witness the conception of community spaces that are built around an object of creation such as RISO duplicators, laser cutters, 3d printers, or a letterpress. This questions the role of artistic academic institutions, and the activity of faculty and students communities within them. How can we encourage, within this framework, an attitude of self-organisation, ideology of self-education, and a use of hybrid-practices? Additionally, how can we also improve traditional graphic design pedagogy in these times of rapid technological advancement?

Graphic designers and studios are already exploring the use of digital fabrication alongside traditional printing techniques. As an example, the London-based letterpress printer and design studio New North Press has already developed and produced 3D printed and laser cut letterpress fonts. Their exploration aimed to merge digital fabrication and analogue printing techniques in the frame of a professional practice, and their research resulted in high quality objects, reliant on the efforts of design and production specialists.

Drawing inspiration from the aforementioned studio, this project will approach this research from a different angle. Aware of the limitations of equipment and materials within an educational institution, we propose, rather than aspiring to achieve perfection, to take advantage of the limitations and use them as a creative resource.

Experimentations to date include: developing letterpress characters using 3d printing, laser cutting letter stencils in Plexiglas, developing mono-print tiles using both laser cutting and 3d printing to compare materials, modular tiles laser cut for custom mono-prints or embossing, and plotted masks for silkscreen frames.

Through the prototyping process, a catalogue of tools is designed to develop educational resources, and improve working, teaching, and learning techniques through an auto-didactic process.

This project is currently in active development, and stands as the preliminary stage of a broader thesis that, by drawing parallels between contemporary publishing, graphic design, zine-culture, and the rise of the artist books in the 70s, investigates a return to craft and a reconsideration of the published object in a post-digital era.

# TYPOGRAPHY AND ARTIST'S BOOK. EMILIO SDUN'S EXPERIENCE

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*Keywords: Typography, Letterpress, Artist Book, Emilio Sdun*

## INTRODUCTION

Study and enhancement of the editorial production of the German artist and typographer Dieter Sdun. We focus on the period between he founded the publishing house "Schierlingspresse" (Dreieich, 1984) and his moved to Spain in 1996. There he relaunched his editorial as "Prensa Cicuta". Sdun, heir of the powerful German tradition in graphic arts, was instructed in a period strongly influenced by classical avant-garde. He dedicates his entire life to publishing books and other printed material, in which typography (Letterpress) becomes a fundamental part of his work. He also employed much of his time lived in Spain in the transmission of his knowledge. In doing so, he formed students and young printers who then began to recover the movable type printing, its manual composition and printing with typographic presses.

## BACKGROUND. THE BOOK, TYPOGRAPHY AND HISTORICAL AVANT-GARDE.

The influence of the European avant-garde in the first stage of Sdun is evident. As most of the artists of his generation he assimilated the heritage of the historical avant-gardes; Expressionists, Futurists, Dadaists, Constructivists ... that directly influence all the artistic fields. The proliferation of posters, political-theoretical pamphlets, manifestos and printed documents of European artists whilst the first decades of the last century are materialized in the works of Apollinaire, Marinetti, Jean Arp, Sonia Delaunay, Max Ernst, Kurt Shwitters, Francis Picabia, Tristan Tzara, André Breton, Marcel Duchamp or El Lissitzky.

These works (printed material) made in the period of classic avant-garde, didn't receive the consideration and importance they deserve on this moment. Despite of it, on many of these works were where the original artists' ideas were best manifested, and these printed materials are now essential to study the social and artistic events of these avant-garde movements. Artists decided to explore the possibilities of the book and the printed page, which made them change the traditional ways of art, and to discover new ways of artistic

expression. The nowadays known as “artist’s book” was one of those new kinds of art that allowed creators to experience more broadly and freely all kinds of ideas and novel contributions. Artist’s book do not pretend to illustrate texts. On the contrary, the aim is to perform through an graphic language the author’s original idea. The classic avant-gardes were the authentic precedent of the contemporary artist’s book that began in the sixties, and also the incentive of numerous publishers, gallery owners and artists who have published illustrated books and artist publications.

Subsequently, throughout the twentieth century, an important work has been developed with regard to the creative use of typography in the book. Although the gradual introduction of new technologies has been displacing the use of movable type printing, there are still artists and printers who continue working with this old manual typewriting systems and print on old typographic machines as if they still being in the past. Among them it is important to highlight the figure of Dieter Emil Sdun, artist, typographer and editor who comes from the Central European typographic tradition. As inheritor of the classic avant-gardes, Sdun dedicated his all life and work to the book and printed material with these all type of printing, contributing to recover its relevance.

## **DIETER EMIL SDUN (EMILIO SDUN). AN APPROACH TO HIS BIOGRAPHY AND CAREER.**

Sdun was born in Leubnitz (Saxony) in 1944 and died in Los Guiraos (Almería) in 2015. He studied at the School of Arts and Crafts in Berlin, beginning his professional work in 1963. At the end of his student period, and during the decade of the Seventies, he worked in a printing press in that same city. The moment coincides with the years of updating of the Graphic Arts, when the introduction of the Offset printer makes printing presses get rid of the old typography material, which needs further more space and that had become obsolete. Sdun takes advantage of this circumstance to conserve all this precious material, obtaining a great variety of letters, printer mobiliary and printing presses that later allowed him to form his own workshop and begin editorial activity.

With Doris, his wife, he founded in 1984 the publishing house “Schierlingspresse” in Dreieich (Frankfurt) with the purpose of working in the field of artist’s books using experimentally the traditional techniques of composition and printing with movable type printing. The editions of this publishing house are books of limited edition, very careful in its design and presentation. In them it fundamentally combines typography and, sometimes, also image making the edition always with traditional art editing techniques.

## CONCLUSIONS

After the first professional stage developed in Germany, Doris and Emilio Sdun moved their residence and workshop to Spain in 1996. Its settlement in Los Guiraos (Almería) would mean a huge change in its production and the concept of its work. His editions thereafter begin to be collaborations with Hispanic artists and writers. He translates the name of his publishing house to "Prensa Cicuta" and his own name, from Dieter Sdun to Emilio Sdun. During this period, he devotes much of his time to the dissemination of his technical knowledge and his own editions, participating in Fairs and providing numerous training courses for professionals and students in Universities and Art Schools.

Sdun worked intensely with the original graphic work and the illustrated books of limited edition, setting the typography at the center of all his production. In 1991 he was awarded in Mainz with the highest German distinction for printing, the "V.O.Stomps" award. His works are part of some of the most important Museums, Libraries and Collections in Europe and America, such as: Tate Gallery or Victoria & Albert Museum in London, Kunstbibliothek in Berlin, Landes Museum in Darmstadt, Art Center College of Design de Pasadena (USA).



# I.E. MAGAZINE: EXPERIMENTATION AND LEARNING OUT OF CLASSES

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*Keywords: Independent publishing, Letterpress printing, Workshop production, Academic project*

## CONTEXT

Successive technological advances and the overwhelming presence of digital tools in our daily lives, necessarily have an impact on design practice, where there is a growing preference for immediate and ephemeral communication channels, instead of manual and craft practices. This paper aims to address issues related to independent publishing and the exploration of traditional production techniques in a workshop context, namely through the extracurricular project – i.E. Magazine – that the students of the Degree in Design and Graphic Arts Technology of [author(s) identification redacted by program chairs], have been developing in recent years, aiming to contribute to explore and learn outside the classroom and encouraging the use of the equipment and materials provided by the printing laboratories of this institution.

The i.E. Magazine, owned by the students, has acted as a platform for exploring the polytechnic laboratories, but also as a way of expressing their ideas, without the commitment to respond to an training, agenda or problem placed in the context of the classroom. The students, in each edition, are responsible for the choice of contents to be addressed, for the writing or external solicitation of articles, for the production of images and illustrations, for design and layout, for the choice of materials and for the production. In recent editions they has also been care to use fonts designed by students or alumni of the Design Degree or the Master of Editorial Design.

# RESEARCH

## INDEPENDENT PUBLISHING

Today the graphic designer presents himself with a different role, detached from the principles presented to us by the history of design, as it often comes up with the role of producer / editor of content and / or solutions. This feature is deeply explored by Lupton (2012) or Margolin (2002) and was named by Heller (2002) like “designer as authorpreneur”, in a junction of the words author and entrepreneur. This event can find its peak when we talk about self-publishing, independent publishing, author editing or fanzines, channels increasingly used by designers, illustrators and photographers to share their work or stating a conviction or orientation towards a particular and restricted set of readers.

The origin of this kind of self-published publications – often produced in a do-it-yourself approach and distributed in underground circuits – may be traced back to the 1920-30s with the appearance of the first fanzines (Triggs, 2010). These publications were basic, handcrafted, low-cost, limited-diffusion, and circuit-restricted objects, often associated with science fiction fans. Only later, in the 1950-60s, this sort of publication reach its peak when they became the main vehicle for the dissemination of the punk and comic scene (Atton, 2002). However, the production of this type of independent publications does not seem to have ceased in the last decades, and even in Portugal, there is a growing interest in this communication vehicle, which is evident in the number of existing editions, the number of events and exhibitions devoted to this topic, or even to the scientific research that has been devoted to it.

As a reflection of today's society, with the emergence of the internet and the easy access to desktop publishing tools, many of these publications also take the form of online editions – complementary or not to a print edition – thus increasing the reach and distribution of these titles to then confined to a very restricted group (Quintela & Borges, 2015). These technological transformations will allow the arrival of a new generation of “publishers” who will produce their own content, design and print the publication without the need for great technical knowledge. The growing concepts such as printing-on-demand or web-to-print further enhances the ease of producing self-edited or independent publications without the burden of high printing investment, as it becomes possible to print at a small cost (Borges, 2013).

But, despite this increasingly use of new information technologies in the context of self-publishing, there is also a growing commitment to return to the craft, underground, or do-it-yourself context, mainly associated with publications born in creative circles – where many titles proliferate – with a high aesthetic care visible either in design or in the choice of printing materials and techniques. Bártolo (2012) states that this growing

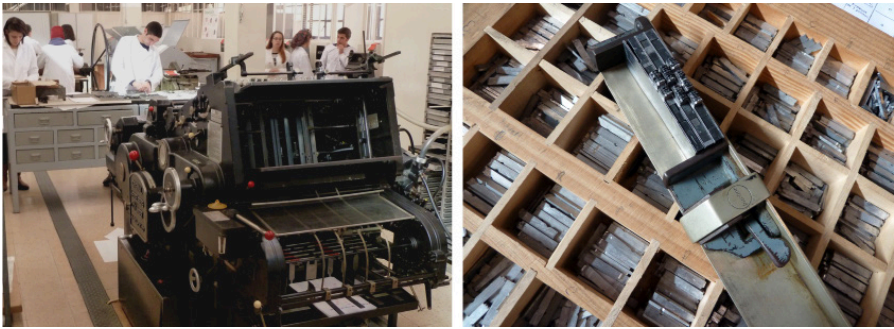
“enthusiasm for publishing” is also reflected in the spread of spaces dedicated to the distribution, sale and dissemination of this type of publication, as well as dedicated events and exhibitions.

However, as opposed to the producers of fanzines of the 1920s–30s, “by definition, self-taught amateurs without specific graphic or editorial learning” (Quintela & Borges, 2015), now the publisher’s profile has high level skills of graphic and editorial design. Thus this type of publications become increasingly bold graphically, selective in what materials and reproduction techniques to use, turning them often in hybrid objects or in so-called big books. This evolution occurs because design as a discipline is no longer dependent only on an external customer, but increasingly becomes a self-conscious discipline with its own audience (Moura, 2011).

## PRODUCTION IN WORKSHOP CONTEXT

As described earlier, the designer integrated into a mainstream universe follows a different path from the designer who puts himself at the centre of the creative and productive process of a given project, when stimulated by the desire to create and publish his own content. In this case, motivation may, in many situations, depend on a social or political context. But the familiarity with production spaces, as in the project presented below, can increase the skills to solve problems. The school, as a place of learning but simultaneously as a space for experimental production, will decisively enhance the creativity of the future designer. In laboratories or workshops, it is intended “to show the importance of teaching graphic design in the use of experimentation methods in which students are led to ‘get their hands dirty’” (Silva, 2016).

These spaces dedicated to practical exploration have a particular profile when implanted in an highly academic context. Their users do not have a specific or definitive role and they must be prepared to adapt to the unforeseen during the printing process, but they should also be willing to cooperate and share their experience. “The workshop is an active space, with bridges to other contexts, industrial and traditional, collaborative in essence, with congenital predisposition to the spread, in which we participate. This is the nature of the impression and the workshop, to make an idea multiply and spread through contact.” (Machado, 2012).



*Fig. 1 and 2 – Example of the workshop space, equipment and materials available at Polytechnic letterpress lab*

This is how designers can most easily become authors and producers, not merely projecting themselves as someone who solves a communication problem, but often as the author of that problem and the producer of a solution. Lupton (2012) describes this new professional as a “maker of content and shaper of experiences”, a designer willing to get his hands dirty, face production problems that may occur while undertaking a project, prepared above all to find solutions and provide the final product. The collaborative and experimental character of these spaces in an educational context allows the student to explore their ability to design solutions that meet existing workshop conditions, preparing them for the possibility that the end result might not be the one originally intended. It is thus possible to explore the materiality of the end product as well, sometimes by taking advantage of chance or trial and error, as well as combining the production resources in order to create new solutions to traditional problems.

## **I.E. MAGAZINE #6 CASE STUDY**

The act of publishing something is still understood by many publishers as making an idea, opinion or point of view public. “To publish is to put yourself out there, by proclaiming that you have content that is worth sharing with other people. (...) Most publishing ventures, however, are not so much motivated by profit as by the universal human desire to share ideas through permanent, reproducible, exchangeable media.” (Lupton, 2008). It was in this context of willingness to share that in 1998 a group of students came together to create a magazine whose content, design and production could be entirely from their responsibility, using only the tools and resources provided by the printing laboratories of the school.

Thus arose the Magazine i.E., as a vehicle for learning, experimentation and dissemination of what could be produced by students in a workshop context, independently, without having to answer to a teacher or customer. In 1998 and 1999 the numbers 0 and 1 were

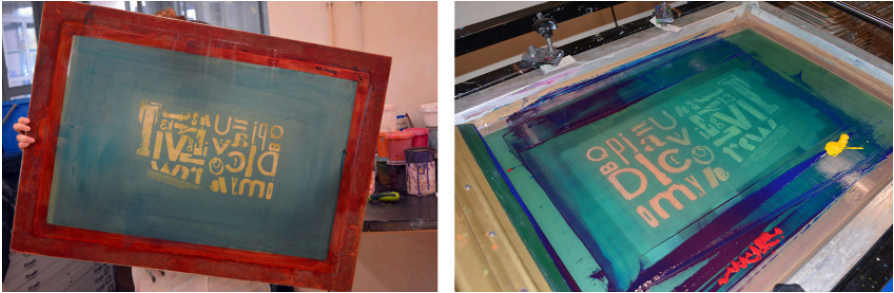
edited, but the fact that this was a project exclusively produced by the students dictated its non-continuity. However, this experience was not forgotten and the teachers themselves used this publication as an example of good practice. Thus, in 2013 re-emerged a group of students willing to give life to this publication, and to ensure the continuity of the project, now the publication has an editor (teacher) that will bridging the gap between students from different years of the Design Degree as well as Master students. Since then, nine more issues have been edited.

For each of the magazine the editor usually create a set of technical or financial limitations, which the students should be able to solve. In the specific case of the sixth edition, used in this paper as a case study, there was the premise of producing 500 different covers without using digital printing techniques. The students involved understood this limitation as a challenge and set out to explore the techniques of typographic and screen printing in articulation, in order to solve the problem presented. Using the typographic collection available at our lab – mostly made up of lead and wood letterpress type – different specimens were printed, photographed and then digitally treated to create a typographic composition for the magazine cover. Once this composition was created, it was time to use silkscreen printing in order to simulate a personalization for each cover. This was achieved because at each print was added a different colour, thus ensuring that each time a copy was printed, the ink was mixed differently. Cover printing paper – Fedrigoni Sirio Sabbia E20 290grs – has been selected to simulate the texture of the letterpress print.



*Fig. 3 – Overview of the variety of covers created using screen printing techniques*

In addition to the fact that the magazine's production reflect the exploration of different materials, technologies and equipment available in our lab, this project also tries to encourage type design. All typefaces used in the magazine are designed by students or alumni. In the issue 5, it was launched in partnership with Adobe, a typeface design competition whose results were published in edition number 6.



*Fig. 4 and 5 – Screen printing matrix used in magazine cover production*

## CONCLUSION

In current graphic production, the do-it-yourself practices have been assuming increasing importance, revealing themselves as privileged spaces of expression and artistic and personal experimentation. Indeed, if this kind of magazines have tended to be known only in restricted media, now there is a growing consumer interest in this kind of self-produced, independent and rudimentary produced.

In the specific case presented – i.E. Magazine # 6 – it was essential to use the laboratories where traditional letterpress or screen printing could be experienced, making the student aware of a much broader reality beyond what they find on the computer, digital tools, or even within a traditional classroom. Having access to more experimental learning methods allows us to amplify the student's creative vision and is able to improve learning processes. The collaborative methodologies used in the context of a workshop are relevant in graphic design and editorial practices, placing the designer also as author, collaborator and producer, able to dictate content and practical solutions of high value. The improvement of the creative processes and the tools used, makes the designer as author, a more informed and conscious professional, allowing the approach to the technologies and contributing to their recognition and applicability in a professional context.

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# LETTERPRESS OUT OF NOTHING

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*Keywords: experience, teamwork, improvised, DIY*

## INTRODUCTION

What if you are a digital type designer and you are invited to conduct a 4-hour workshop at summer design school for graphic and web designers on the coast of Lake Baikal, a six hours flight from your hometown? And what if you agree and then find out that the workshop should be open air and participants must not bring computers to the summer school?

I decided to make a non-digital type workshop — and that meant letterpress.

I asked the organizers to find some press on site or to make it themselves — so they did, using thick plywood and a jack-screw. I constructed an adjustable frame from 6 mm plywood, thin threaded rods and butterfly nuts and brought it with me, as well as the printing ink.

The day before workshop I asked the participants what text they wanted to set and print and what kind of type they preferred to make. They chose blackletter in memory of Johann Gutenberg. So I wrote the calligraphic prototypes with a parallel pen for all the letters, more or less the same size they had to be cut. Then I cut the paper to pieces with two or three letters on each.

Every participant a piece of paper with letters letters to draw them mirrored and cut, all happening in an open pavillion of rough wood just by the coast. We used erasers as material and office knives, and a rubber stamp pad for proofing. When all the letters were cut we set them into the frame and printed using a roller, printing ink and the press. And after the four hours ended, everyone could use the letters and press to set and print their own text.

As far as I know, they called this improvised letterpress workshop the most impressive part of the summer school :)



# EXPRESSION OF POWER THROUGH WOOD TYPE: NEWSPAPER HEADINGS

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*Keywords: wood type, Sinhala wood type, political power, newspaper headings, Sinhala newspaper*

## INTRODUCTION

This research sets out to explore the wood type used in Sinhala newspaper headlines during early independent Sri Lanka. Within this timeline, the composed headings were transitioning from metal type to wood type, while the growth of wood type projected itself as a louder voice due to its size and shape. The research examines the imprints of wood type to investigate craft expertise and to uncover the design histories of local type communities. The study further re-examines the political influence on the crafting of wood type, its visual expression and its authenticity within the local communities.

## BACKGROUND OF THE RESEARCH

From the 16th – 20th century Sri Lanka's economic, social and political factors were strongly influenced by Portuguese, Dutch, and English as the country was ruled by the westerners. As a result, the introduction of the printing press, the knowledge on printing techniques, the establishment of industries such as publication, the newspaper was born. Nevertheless, by the year 1948 Sri Lanka gained its independence and was on a road to building its own political power. It was during this time we noticed the growth of new political parties and discussions on democracy and for this, the newspaper became one of the strongest tools to communicate with the masses. As a result printing presses were dedicated to certain political parties. The literacy level among the people was low yet, they had a practice of meeting at village boutiques to listen to a literate read the newspaper. It is also important to note that it was during this time the newspapers showed a range of large typefaces and certain party-specific colours used on the cover of the newspaper. Therefore, the impact of the message, the headline and the overall visual appearance of the newspaper stands out in comparison to earlier times. Thus, the research question arose from the above-mentioned background knowledge and on the inquiry of the visual characteristics of the typeface used in these headlines.

The data required for this research, which in this case the newspapers printed during the early independent era of Sri Lanka is archived at the Department of National Archives, Colombo, Sri Lanka. The technique used to print the samples\_ the letters was letterpress and the identification of this technique can be achieved by observing the impression, its grain/s or the rugged finish established by the application of pressure, ink on the surface.

## **AIM AND OBJECTIVES**

The aim of the research was to investigate craft expertise on wood type in newspaper headings through archival material, to uncover the design histories of local communities – more specific to political power. To achieve this the objectives were structured as below:

To define the political journey of independent Sri Lanka and the use of newspapers as a mode of communication to address the masses.

To identify adaptation of letterpress technology within the local type community – crafting Sinhala wood type.

To establish design history by underlining the visual styles of wood type used in newspaper headings.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The required archival material (registered newspapers) will be gathered from the Department of National Archives, Colombo, Sri Lanka from 1948 -1980. The time period covers the country's independence (1948) and the late letterpress era of the Sinhala newspaper industry. Based on the availability of data, sample newspapers(NP) will be selected for this study. They will be scanned at 600dpi resolution for clarity. The research will be conducted in two stages:

### **STAGE ONE**

Will focus on the political journey of independent Sri Lanka and the use of newspapers as a mode of communication to address the masses. This will be conducted through a literature survey and by observing the available newspapers at the National Archives. The literature discusses the key turning point within the political arena after receiving independence from the British. The literature also includes the task of the newspaper as a mode of communication. Meanwhile, the existing newspapers within the timeline were included in a database. The sample number was decided on the political reformations, availability of publications and newspapers published by the leading political parties of the country.

## STAGE TWO

Will focus on how the letterpress technology was adapted by the local type community based on a specimen study. The scanned NPs will be observed with the intention of understanding the complete character set. For this purpose, ten sample letters will be selected as the headlines are composed of a limited number of letters (not sufficient to complete the set).

The observed data will be compiled into a table with the following: the number of type specimens gathered from each newspaper, the name of the newspaper and the year of publication.

Thereafter, the specimens representing each typeface will be observed based on its visual characteristics, more specific to the terminals of the typeface and the print quality of the newspaper.

The analysis of the wood typefaces will be based on the 'pa-height', ascender, descender, stroke width, character proportions, contrast and weight of the type.

By underlying existing visual data (initial findings) the research establishes the visual styles of Sinhala wood type.

This knowledge was compared with literature on letterpress technology to establish the local craft of wood type, its influence that built the craft community.

## RESULTS AND CONCLUSION

The result of this research is the recording of wood type used in newspaper headlines within a particular timeline, from 1948 to 1980. The analysis was conducted by comparing the samples. The results show the letterpress technology used for the wood type was similar to the usual practice in comparison to the west yet the notable fact was the size, width, and height being common across while the visual variation was high. This is significant with the terminals. Meanwhile, the 'pa-height', ascender, descender, stroke width, character proportions, contrast and weight of the type varied.

It established that the newspaper was a strong means of communication to the masses as it spoke visually with political-party colours; the content, the newspaper title, heading and the body text as they were printed in party-specific colours. The prints were limited to single, two and rarely three colours. The composition of the heading across the later part of the letterpress era (1965-1980) showed significant growth in visual style.

## CONTRIBUTION

This study recorded samples of Sinhala typefaces used during a specific timeline as a contribution to the field of typography. It marked the historical and technological boundaries of a specific community.

# CONTEMPORARY PRINT IN THE MUSEUM: INNOVATION IN UNEXPECTED PLACES

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*Keywords: Post-digital, Letterpress, Museum, Innovation, Collaboration*

## INTRODUCTION

This paper will examine how certain institutions, museums and letterpress printers develop an innovative practice while providing a historical context to its visitors. It will discuss what goes on behind the scenes at a 'working museum' and question how the future of these institutes, the global knowledge of letterpress and how international collaborations can strengthen this artistic potential.

The ICOM, or the International Council of Museums' guidelines, only refers to a 'working museum', but this paper will evaluate whether it is possible to run an operational print museum, which demonstrates innovative practices and retaining the existing knowledge of letterpress. This paper will seek to define what a contemporary 'working print museum' can offer to audiences, how it can not only be a site for reimagining the past but provide new forms of research and pioneering adaptations of old technologies.

This research is inspired by the concept that as the initial infatuation with new technologies has passed and, as throughout printmaking history, we have entered a relationship with them in expanded artistic adventure. Cantanese, P. (2012). The paper promotes the idea that printmaking and letterpress allow for a collaborative approach which not only serves to strengthen communities, Lawton, Pamela & Storz, Cosima. (2018). but can be more than a mere reproduction of a historical process and can allow for expanded experimentation.

By examining the work of certain unique institutes which are currently involved in practices of contemporary bookmaking, printing and publishing; this paper will discuss new adaptations of technology and the potential of hybrid approaches to letterpress print. It will focus on two examples in particular, from the Estonian Paper and Print Museum, in Tartu, Estonia and the Book Art Museum in Łódź, Poland. The paper will evaluate how they maintain their integrity to the heritage of print, its practice and processes while embracing cutting edge and innovative approaches. The paper will examine original and contemporary projects such as; integrating a Raspberry Pi into the type-casting process, exploring the limits of post-press photography and discovering how physical computing

systems embedded into the printed piece. It will also discuss the different approaches towards collaboration, the importance of print in strengthening communities and further new and experimental outcomes in letterpress print. Within these hybrid spaces; where museum mingles with working studio, their focus embodies three themes; conserving the heritage of print; inquiring into contemporary tools; and encouraging multi-disciplinary, artistic collaboration.

Through an in-depth look of the contemporary practices, roots and developments of these two key institutions and their approaches, this paper will raise questions surrounding the role of museums in the world of post-digital print. It will look at the future of the 'working print museum' and suggest how contemporary letterpress practices can extend through further international and European collaboration.

# ANTI-AMNESIA: ARTICULATING DESIGN AND MEDIA TOWARDS LETTERPRESS PRINTING'S HERITAGE PRESERVATION AND VALUE CREATION

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*Keywords: Letterpress printing, Anti-Amnesia, Heritage, Design culture*

## INTRODUCTION

Letterpress printing, as practice and research, has been reframing its definition and scope in current scenarios framed by a post-digital culture.

This paper acknowledges the multidisciplinary role of media within the context of Anti-Amnesia, a research project that seeks to sustain disappearing traditional industries and practices in northern and central Portugal. Among the initiative's core case studies is letterpress printing, as represented by Tipografia Damasceno, a printmaker based in Coimbra, which is celebrating its 50th anniversary since its inception in 1969. However, due to modern-day technological and commercial realities, the traditional printmaker is facing significant challenges in terms of market/maker retention, thus, affecting its viability.

It is addressed a global outlook that deals with methods, strategies and creativity, and copes with new and more complex challenges and work forms. Thus, it is presently necessary to address design's role in terms of overall cultural change, and in particular, within the scope of restoring a craft-based local economy currently on the decline. In the proposed intervention process, however, the agency of the term "media" and "design" is respectively taken into different frames of reference: as a generative resource for media-tion and re-contextualization – by collecting and compiling ethnographic data and archival source material; as a set of devices for disseminating the legacy and continued validity of traditional industrial practices to international audiences; and as a mediation tool in creative processes.

This proposed approach opens up possibilities to provide meaningful contributions towards generating innovation that is better suited to people's common and particular needs, desires, and aspirations connected with the products and services they acquire. In current visual, cultural and media framework, letterpress printing's heritage is a cultural asset and a resource for the production of visual graphic design.

The research developed within the research project and its fieldwork has identified the proper conditions to provide the traditional practice of letterpress an alternative source of belated recognition within the referential framework of design, wherein letterpress and the experimental universe of printing processes represent a field of theoretical and practical research that can become a key entry point for discourses on the historical and semantic capital of communication design on the whole.

Design and visual practice is recognizable as a key requirement for innovation, competitiveness, and development of letterpress and other traditional printing production techniques, in this post-digital ground. In terms of cultural preservation, Anti-Amnesia acknowledges the protagonists and processes of these industries and crafts as heritage in themselves, and accordingly, its restorative actions focus on the challenges that are axiomatic, such as limitations to productivity, competitiveness, a holistic comprehension of value, and sustainability.

Additionally, the synergy that has been created between the various involved entities, including printmakers, researchers, students and designers, has become central to realizing the project's primary expectations, including the activation of methodologies for print production and the bridging between concepts as heritage and economical and cultural sustainability.

# LETTERPRESS IS (NOT) A SERIOUS BUSINESS: EXPERIMENTS IN A DESIGN COURSE

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*Keywords: letterpress, design education, color, activism*

## INTRODUCTION

This article aims to reflect on the current practices of a small letterpress workshop from a Design course – BA in Communication Design, Delli – Lusófona University.

In this “instagramic” and “pinterestian” era, it is broadly accepted that analogic experimentation (alongside with learning to develop proper theoretical and iconographical research) is particularly relevant in design education, providing what has been often forgotten in the past years, namely the paradoxical sense of freedom resulting from working with the limitations imposed by materials and its fisicality.

By this and other reasons, students at Delli are introduced to letterpress in the first semester of the course, (in a subject relating color with printing matters), being provided with further experiences throughout the course, in the context of short courses/ masterclasses.

What we’ve been noticing is that the potential of Letterpress to students transcends printing itself, being a vehicle to several other aspects of Design and visual communication, as we intend to demonstrate through the following exercises/ projects:

a) “We are the robots” (Oct. 2019).

An exercise with first year students which purpose was to introduce students to the expressive potential of letterpress (as in the study of David Jury) while working with the seven color contrasts identified by Johannes Itten. Organized in groups, students had to create and print a typographic illustration representing a robot (human scale) which would be expressive in typographic and chromatic terms.

b) AAAAAARGGH! (Mar. 2019)

Masterclass which intended to explore the sonorous dimension of typography while facing the fisicality of wooden and lead type. The result was a set of unfolding onomatopoeic creatures whose bodies display the sounds they produce, evoking concrete poetry.



c) Praxe. Workshop on Activism (Oct. 2019)

3 Day Workshop consisting in creating, printing and implementing a campaign – set of posters about a chosen theme. Here, students experienced the letterpress potential for expressing social concerns, being given the examples of Robin Fior and Alan Kitching among others.

d) Coffee or Taking type for a walk (2018)

In addition to introducing students to this technology, this workshop intended to work on letterpress printing in combination with drawing, with coffee as a general theme. Thus, starting from texts alluding to coffee by different authors (Raymond Carver Paul Francis Webster, Otis Redding, etc.), a publication was produced (miscellaneous posters, folding and postcards) in which the printed word and drawing embody concepts and emotions of the coffee as a ritual or everyday element.

In all these exercises students struggle and experience some frustration, but that same process is very enriching, for it means: working with the unpredictable and its flaws; taking risks; learning to wait and to be patient; but also working with your whole body and feeling the power and joy resulting from producing your own design/art piece.

# LETTERPRESS AS EDUCATION PLATFORM

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*Keywords: education, processes, time, letterpress*

## INTRODUCTION

After some years teaching printing techniques one thing has become apparent: students are out of touch with the processes behind printing. Note that when we talk about printing, we are not including digital printing; this is a relatively straight forward process. You press a combination of keys on your keyboard and, almost magically, a printed sheet of your work pops out of the printer. For these purposes we are talking about “analog” printing processes like silk screening, offset and, of course, letterpress. It’s not strange realizing that young designers are out of touch with these processes, but it is troubling. But what is the purpose of teaching something like letterpress today? Letterpress is dead and gone, right? In fact, “Print is Dead”, according to David Carson (or was it Lewis Blackwell?). So why do it? What do students get from this practice?

We have been studying this issue with the goal of discovering what students learn, working with letterpress, other than the “how to”. For that we looked into authors like Elliot Eisner, Fernando Hernandez and Ellen Lupton, all of which have different views on art education.

We conducted a series of workshops, testing the participants for skills necessary for working on a letterpress printing floor. Skills like patience, tolerance to error, respect for the space and the machinery (or run the risk of losing a finger), capacity for being organized and methodical, cleanliness and the comprehension of a system. After working on the printing shop for some weeks, we evaluated, in a qualitative fashion, the progression of the participants. This process has been ongoing for two years now, going into the fourth.

It hasn’t been easy accessing the results. Most students come into the printing shop with limitations, such as, not knowing how to properly hold a screwdriver or how to tighten a bolt (in which way to turn the screw), let alone understand what CMYK color separation might be. Some progress has been made; however, we are still working on proposals and models which we can use to engage with our audience, taking them through these printing

processes. After all, this is a craft that an apprentice would learn over 7 years; the relationship would be that of an apprentice and mentor, not teacher and students (emphasis on students being plural).

With this research, we aim at rethinking letterpress as a vehicle and platform for education, not just for the typography, history or printing area, but for a broader art education.

