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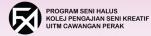
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TYPOGRAPHY ANATOMY

Typographic Assemblage as Mural Design in Campus

a chapter by

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Introduction

"Typography is the art and craft of designing letters, which are essential for communication in our everyday life, regardless of medium or conventional meaning"
- *Yordanova (2022)*
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Typography serves a crucial function in data visualization by enhancing the overall design and facilitating the audience's understanding and absorption of information (Türkkan, 2020). Within the domain of graphic design studies, the Typography course holds a significant position. Its importance extends beyond introducing students to lettering fundamentals, encompassing exposure to techniques for manipulating typographic designs to craft visually compelling modes of communication. As a result, students gain a profound understanding of self-expression, clarity enhancement, critical evaluation, and an overarching appreciation for typography as an essential artistic element in the field.

Broadly defined, typography is the art and technique of arranging letters to create visually appealing and easily readable textual materials (Craig & Scala, 2012). However, today, the role of typography has evolved as the definition has changed. According to Martin (2023), typography is defined as elevating the visual, dynamic and interactive elements within contemporary art, offering possibilities for innovative artistic expressions in computational and videographic systems. With the advent of the digital and graphic era, the scope of typography has expanded, with computers becoming indispensable tools in graphic design production. This shift has indirectly influenced the methods employed in creating typographic designs, whether for business purposes or as forms of artistic expression.

Despite these advancements, there remains a segment of individuals who overlook the profound impact of typography in their daily lives. They fail to grasp the psychological effects associated with conveying a message effectively. Often, people perceive typography merely as directional signs and information conveyors through mediums like billboards and signage. Yet, have we ever considered how we read magazines, browse websites, use computer and phone applications, or watch television without acknowledging the principles of typographic design? While content may be king, typography acts as the crown, with layout serving as its throne.

The role of Typography

The application of typographic assemblage in an art studio involves various practices, including the study of typography anatomy. An intriguing aspect of this study is to explore how typography anatomy can be assimilated into the surrounding environment. As stated by Hassan (2021), the design of typography has the potential to amplify communication and intellectual depths by employing visual connotations and metaphors. This approach enhances comprehension and perception, ultimately eliciting improved responses from the audience.

The integration of typography into murals has gained significant popularity as a powerful form of visual communication, found in diverse locations such as houses, schools, hotels, offices, restaurants, shops, and shopping centers. These murals showcase a broad spectrum of themed artwork. Therefore, the idea of typographic assemblage plays a role in exploring the extent to which mural art can be further developed with various techniques and methods. Ohls (2022) argued in his experimental study that the new materialist assemblage challenges our comprehension of entities, where artworks, serving as reflective and thought-provoking entities, offer the best tools to keep pace with these

developments.

It's worth noting that murals designed with figurative typography, three-dimensional elements, large-scale letter explorations, and other distinctive designs play a vital role in conveying specific messages.

In contemporary times, typography assemblage on mural walls have become ubiquitous, appearing in various settings. However, three-dimensional (3D) letters as a form of typography design are relatively rare. Typically, the use of 3D letters is more prevalent in signage designs, advertising boards, and signboards (Figure 1). Here, typography extends beyond selecting an appropriate font; it encompasses the art of placement, composition, and type selection, providing a means for expressing language through the chosen type (Ward, 2020). These letters are crafted in large sizes to ensure visibility and readability, thereby effectively providing information and maximizing visual impact.

Picture 1: The use of 3D letters serves to ensure visibility and maximizing impact to audience
Source: Website

In the context of typography courses in education, the choice of implementing typographic assemblage mural project serves two primary objectives:

i. Imparting knowledge of Typography Anatomy

The project was designed to equip students with a deeper understanding of typography anatomy.

Through hands-on engagement in creating three-dimensional murals, students gain practical insights into the intricate details of letter forms, enhancing their comprehension of typography.

ii. Exposing students to real-world application

The project aimed to familiarize students with the practical application of typography in their immediate surroundings. By incorporating typography into the art studio environment, students experience firsthand how this artistic discipline can transform and communicate in diverse settings beyond traditional mediums.

Given the learning environment's context, the project unfolded within an art studio lacking aesthetic attributes consistent with the artistic discipline. The studio, characterized by dim lighting and an unattractive appearance, was hindered by permanently installed furniture and bare walls. These constraints posed challenges for a comprehensive studio upgrade.

Work process

The completion of the assignment, titled 'Mural Anatomy of Assembly Typography,' spanned a three-week period. Directly engaged in the execution were four groups comprising 61 students enrolled in semester one of the Department of Graphic & Digital Media. This assignment marked the inaugural task for students enrolled in the Typography Course (GDT 112) for the first semester.

The task, while straightforward and concise, involved a meticulous work process. Key materials employed in the execution included hard cardboard, adhesive paper stickers, and silicone glue. These materials were instrumental in realizing the three-dimensional letter structures and ensuring the overall integrity of the mural project. The assignment not only provided a hands-on application of typography principles but also fostered collaborative efforts among students in the Department of Graphic & Digital Media.

The initial phase of the assignment commenced with a lecture focusing on the intricacies of typography anatomy. Following this, a project

Picture 2: The use of templates to facilitate the formation of 3D letters
Source: Author

briefing was conducted to elucidate each student's specific tasks. Every student was assigned a typography terminology word to explore through brief research before embarking on the construction of 3D letters. A presentation session was then held, allowing students to share their research findings with one another.

The subsequent stage involved the selection of letters through a computer-based process utilizing templates (Picture 2). Students were required to meticulously plan the size, type, and thickness of the letters before proceeding to the printing stage. While the choice of typeface is flexible, it must be an existing typeface accessible on platforms like dafont.com. This approach aimed to expose students to a diverse array of existing typefaces, enabling them to observe variations in letter categories and styles. Furthermore, the use of templates was deemed essential to ensure fidelity to the original form of letter anatomy and prevent any deviations in the construction process. This meticulous planning phase set the foundation for the subsequent steps in creating the three-dimensional letters for the mural project.

Picture 3: The process of transforming letters into three-dimensional
Source: Author

After the completion of the template-making phase, students advanced to the construction of each letter in three dimensions. To ensure robust and sturdy structures, hard cardboard was employed for the letter framework. The process of transforming the letters into three dimensions is depicted in Picture 3 and demanded a high level of concentration along with a persistent attitude of patience.

Constructing the letters in three dimensions was inherently intricate, requiring careful attention to detail and precision. This phase of the assignment underscores the importance of neatness in the final work, as it served as a tangible representation of the students' output quality. Emphasizing precision and structural integrity, the students navigated through the challenges of this hands-on construction, fostering a deeper appreciation for the artistry and craftsmanship inherent in three-dimensional typography.

The process of letter formation presented several challenges, particularly in achieving precise alignment of letter heights at both the top and bottom sections. Untidiness in the work could result in unstable letters that deviate from the intended character of the letter. In some instances, students had to redo the letter formation due to issues with the initial alignment.

Recognizing the importance of precision in this aspect of the assignment, students had been advised from earlier on to exercise greater care during the letter alignment process. Emphasizing the significance of accuracy, the lecturer encouraged the students to pay close attention to the alignment details to avoid potential complications and ensure the stability and integrity of the final three-dimensional letters. This proactive guidance aimed to mitigate challenges and enhance the overall quality of the students' works.

Picture 6: The combination of typographic anatomy creates a magnificent work of art
Source: Author

Upon completion, the studio wall came to life with

Picture 4: Typography anatomy terminology in three-dimensional form.
Source: Author

a diverse array of letter characters, showcasing the culmination of the students' efforts (Picture 6).

Following the meticulous alignment of letters into three dimensions, students were directed to showcase their work on a table for evaluation by the lecturer before affixing the letters to the wall to create the mural. In Picture 4, various 3D representations of typography anatomy terminologies prepared by students are displayed. The majority of the students expressed satisfaction with their neatly executed work, completed within the stipulated timeframe.

These large-scale letters have the potential to captivate the attention of both graphic design students and external observers, making a significant impact on the mural while providing a clear display of typography anatomy (Picture 7). Consequently, this assignment offered comprehensive exposure to students, guiding them through the entire application process—from computer planning to realizing the actual size of letters within the studio environment.

Conclusion

As stated earlier, the primary goals of this assignment were to impart knowledge about

Picture 5: The process of affixing assembly typography to the studio wall.
Source: Author

Picture 7: Large-scale letters can captivate a significant impact on murals and offering a clear showcase of typography anatomy.
Source: Author

Moving to Picture 5, the final stage of the assignment unfolds, involving the collective gathering of all the students' works and the subsequent affixing of letters to the wall. The mounting process proved to be efficient and swift.

typography anatomy and familiarize students with the practical application of typography in their surroundings. During the presentations, students have shared the following opinions:

a) Regularly viewing the walls becomes a learning experience, with students consistently absorbing knowledge about typography anatomy and feeling a closer connection to the world of typography.

b) Three-dimensional typography murals not only break monotony but also create a sense of comfort, encouraging individuals to linger in that space for longer periods.

c) The artwork transforms the environment, infusing aesthetic values onto the mural walls, thereby making the space unique.

Undoubtedly, traditional typography education has a profound positive impact on graphic design students. Beyond learning about typography as an art form, students can cultivate collaborative skills in disciplined, diligent, and focused group settings. In the context of evolving technological influences on media and design philosophy, it is imperative to expose students to creative and inventive assignments like the one described. This approach provides students with valuable experiences in addressing diverse designs and artistic challenges.

This assignment served as a platform for students to develop and enhance their skills in effectively utilizing lettering art, which proved beneficial for their future careers. The hands-on experience would allow them to grasp the practical nuances of typography design and gain a profound understanding of the tasks and responsibilities associated with professional graphic design. Engaging in creative and innovative projects would enable students to explore the potential of typography as a powerful communication tool and establish a solid foundation in the field. This exposure to real-world design tasks would equip students to navigate the challenges and demands of the industry, providing them with the necessary skills to excel as graphic design professionals.

In future, researchers may explore the utilization of recycled or upcycled materials like reclaimed wood, the adoption of eco-friendly, low-VOC paints, to promote urban biodiversity and enhance energy efficiency. By integrating these environmental considerations, typographic murals would not only serve as visually striking art pieces but also contribute positively to ecological sustainability and awareness.

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