

Second Edition

Updated  
and Expanded

# Making and Break- ing the Grid

Timothy Samara

A Graphic Design Layout Workshop





Making  
and Breaking  
the Grid



Second Edition



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# Conte

# Thought Structure

**For some graphic designers, it has become an unquestioned part of the working process that yields precision, order, and clarity.**

**For others, it is symbolic of Old Guard aesthetic oppression, a stifling cage that hinders the search for expression.**

## An Introduction

The typographic grid is an organizing principle in graphic design whose influence is simultaneously ingrained in current practice and fought over in design education, revered and reviled for the absolutes inherent in its conception. It is a principle with roots in the cultural practices of the oldest societies on the planet. Eking out an existence with some kind of meaning—and creating an understandable order for that meaning—is one of the activities that distinguishes our species from all others.

\_\_\_ Structural thinking, even before its latest codification through European and American Modernism, has been a hallmark of cultures struggling toward civilization. The Chinese, the Japanese, the Greeks and Romans, the Inca—all of these cultures have pursued structural ideas in laying out their towns, conducting warfare, instituting religious rituals, arranging images. In many instances, that structure was predicated on the notion of intersecting axes that corresponded to the intersection of sky and earth.

\_\_\_ The grid instituted by Modernism restated that long-ingrained sense of order, formalizing it yet another degree and transforming it into an established part of design. The typographic grid—a fundamental tenet of the International Style—is an orthogonal planning system that parcels information into manageable chunks. The assumption of this system is that placement and scale relationships between informational elements—whether words or images—help an

audience understand their meaning. Like items are arranged in similar ways so that their similarities are made more apparent and, therefore, more recognizable. The grid renders the elements it controls into a neutral spatial field of regularity that permits accessibility—viewers know where to locate information they seek because the junctures of horizontal and vertical divisions act as signposts for locating that information. The system helps viewers understand its use. In one sense, the grid is like a visual filing cabinet.

\_\_\_ As an institutionalized metaphor for all that is right in the world—the intersection of heaven and earth made manifest in every object it governs—the grid has also been imbued with an explicitly spiritual quality. Its early proponents among the European avant-garde fought zealously on its behalf: Theo van Doesburg's mere tilting of the 90° de Stijl axis caused his partner, Piet Mondrian, to sever ties; Josef Müller-Brockmann, the grid's Swiss champion in the 1950s and 1960s, defined its will to order in nearly canonical terms.

\_\_\_ For the graphic designers who helped society struggle to move forward after two unimaginable wars, order and clarity became their most important goals. Part of that order, of course, meant consumer comforts; and the businesses that provided them recognized soon enough that the grid could help organize their public presence and their bottom lines.

# son

— As the use of grids has changed from self-conscious gesture to that of second-nature reflex, so, too, has the viewing public become more accustomed to information presented to them in greater quantities, simultaneously, in greater complexity, and in more languages. And they're not simply accustomed to it: they want it that way. The grid's minimal simplicity is somewhat at odds with the kinetic, shifting surface of multi media; information isn't flat anymore, and the average person expects it to move, jump, twist, and make noise. Paradoxically, the corporations that clothed themselves in the grid's neutral, utopian uniform helped create the oversaturated environment that is currently in demand.

— Recent years have seen the design profession, its activities, and 'design thinking,' come to the forefront of public consciousness; it's become an especially important discipline for the information age. Within the design community, discussions of accessibility, gender, race, and other social concerns are given greater priority than the intrinsic relationships between form, organization, and meaning; it's hard to find that kind of discussion in the design industry any more. Given that form making and its organization are inextricably linked to the visual dissemination of information, however, it seems likely that this simple-seeming discussion could really be a bit more complex, perhaps even wrapping these same bigger issues that graphic designers

have been giving more attention... an aesthetic 'unconscious' of sorts we've decided to ignore without realizing its fundamental hegemony.

— The current era is a little bit like that of Victorian England during the first Industrial Revolution, in the sense that we're living through another paradigmatic shift in technology and culture: Our appliances talk to us, our vision is global. The world's vast space has been reduced metaphorically as well as physically, and we're learning to cope with an uncomfortable intimacy as the private self recedes and resources dwindle. Our own industrial revolution's similarity to its antecedent continues, not unexpectedly, in its influence on the arts. A plurality of oft conflicting approaches reflects the general cultural confusion that has pervaded the beginning of this millennium.

— Interestingly, since the publication of this book's first edition in 2003, grid use has become remarkably prevalent, ostensibly driven by the practical demands of responsive UX design in a world increasingly linked by online communication. It may also reflect a renewed urge for cultural unity in response to that early millennial confusion. Simplicity, order, and visual neutrality in communication are, historically, strategies aimed at facilitating inclusivity... But they also pose a potential threat through the aesthetic (and, arguably, intellectual) conformity they engender: designers need only consider the ubiquity of similarly templated,

almost interchangeable, websites and branded communication programs in current proliferation to appreciate that efficiencies in organization and production can also render an experiential landscape that is repetitive, undifferentiated, and mind-numbingly dull.

— Given ongoing discussions about identity, the individual's relationship to society at large, and our responsibilities to each other and our shared environment, conversations about where to put things—the mundane 'housekeeping' of grid-based design—still have value, but so too do those concerned with imagining ways of connecting with each other through visual languages that are unexpected, unconventional, and uniquely expressive. 'Information' comes in many varieties, not the least of which are the symbolic, metaphorical, and emotional; efficient transmission need not be the only concern and, quite often, inefficiency in the visualization of information results in an audience's deeper understanding of a message by virtue of the challenges it asks them to overcome.

— Ultimately, it is incumbent upon designers to evaluate the many options for constructing a visual communication they have before them—grid-based and otherwise—and to choose that which allows them to build the most thoughtful, useful, and meaningful experiences for their audiences that they can envision.

The grid system is  
an aid, not a guarantee.  
It permits a number  
of possible uses and  
each designer can  
look for a solution that  
is appropriate to his  
or her personal style.

—

But one must learn  
how to use the grid;  
it is an art that  
requires practice.

Josef Müller-Brockmann



**The grid is like  
a lion in a cage, and  
the designer is the  
lion tamer. It's fun  
to play with the lion,  
but the designer  
has to know when  
to get out before  
the lion eats him.**

Massimo Vignelli

**Graphic design that tries to  
make things simple is not doing  
anybody any real benefit.  
Society needs to understand  
how to deal with the subtlety,  
complexity, and contradiction  
in contemporary life.**

—

**It is possible and necessary to  
have both complexity and  
intelligibility in graphic design.**

Katherine McCoy

Making the Grid

All design work involves problem solving on both visual and organizational levels. Pictures and symbols, fields of text, headlines, tabular data: all these pieces must come together to communicate as a totality. A grid is one approach to doing so.

Before anything else, a grid introduces systematic order to a layout. Not only does it distinguish different types of information, easing a user's navigation through them but—just as importantly—it ensures vital cohesion among visual elements, harmonizing them through the systems of spatial proportions and positioning logic it defines.

Using a grid permits a designer to more rapidly lay out enormous amounts of information because many design considerations are addressed in building the grid's structure at the outset of a project. A grid also allows many individuals to collaborate on the same project, or on related projects, without compromising established visual qualities from one instance to the next. The benefits of working with a grid are simple: clarity, efficiency, and continuity.

To some designers, the grid is an inherent part of the craft of designing, as is joinery in the craft of furniture making. Its assimilation into practice has been part of an evolution in how graphic designers think about designing, as well as a response to specific communication and production issues needing to be addressed at various times throughout the discipline's history.

1

## Coming to Order—

### A Brief History of the Grid in Graphic Design

The grid's development over the past 150 years coincides with dramatic technological and social changes in Western civilization and the response of philosophers, artists, and designers to those changes. The Industrial Revolution that began in 1740s England changed the way people lived—its effect on our culture was fundamental. As the invention of mechanical power induced people to seek a living in cities, power shifted away from the land-owning aristocracy toward manufacturers, merchants, and the working class. Demand from an urban population with ever-increasing buying power stimulated technology, fueling mass production, lowered costs, and increased availability.

\_\_\_ Design assumed an important role in communicating the desirability of material goods. In addition, the French and American revolutions facilitated progress in social equality, public education, and literacy, and helped to create a greater audience for reading material.

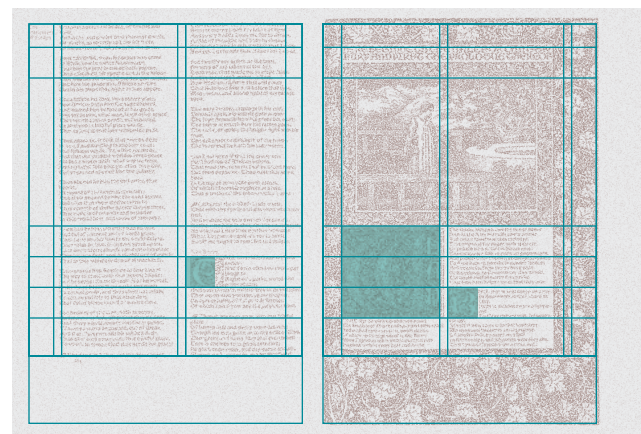
\_\_\_ With this enormous psychographic change came aesthetic confusion. The Beaux-Arts tradition, much unchanged since the Renaissance and bolstered by the strong moral and spiritual convictions of the times, held on to its aesthetic contrivances and notions of neoclassical taste. A Victorian penchant for Gothic architecture merged oddly

with a taste for exotic textures imported from the outreaches of the British Empire.

\_\_\_ Contradictory design approaches and the need to supply the consuming masses with products reached a kind of plateau in 1856 when writer and designer Owen Jones produced *The Grammar of Ornament*, an enormous catalog of patterns, styles, and embellishments that were co-opted to mass-produce poorly made goods of questionable aesthetic quality.

#### FITNESS OF PURPOSE

The English Arts and Crafts movement in architecture, painting, and design grew out of a reaction to this decline. At the movement's forefront was William Morris, a young student of privileged background who had become interested in poetry and architecture—and their seeming disconnection with the industrialized world. Morris was inspired by John Ruskin, a writer who insisted art could be the basis of a social order that improved lives by unifying it with labor, as it had in the Middle Ages. Together with Edward Burne-Jones, a fellow poet and painter, and Philip Webb, an architect, Morris undertook the revitalization of England's daily aesthetic life. Webb's design of Red House in 1860 for a just-married Morris organized the spaces asymmetrically, based on their intended uses, thereby dictat-



*The Works of Chaucer* / Page spread  
After William Morris / The Kelmscott Press  
Author's schematic recreation

ing the shape of the facade. At the time, this idea was unheard of—the prevailing neo-classical model called for a box layout with a symmetrical facade.

— Furthermore, no suitable furnishings existed for such a house. Morris was compelled to design and supervise the production of all its furniture, textiles, glass, and objects, becoming a master craftsman in the process. The company that resulted from this experience, Morris and Company, vigorously advocated the notion that fitness of purpose inspired form; their prolific output in textiles, objects, glass, and furnishings heralded a way of working that responded to content, was socially concerned, and paid utmost attention to the finished quality of the work, even when it was mass-produced.

— Arthur Mackmurdo and Sir Emery Walker, two of Morris’ contemporaries, directed his attention toward type and book design. Mackmurdo’s periodical, *The Hobby Horse*, espoused the same qualities—a purposeful proportioning of space and careful control of type size, type selection, margins, and print quality—to which Morris had aspired, but in printed form. In 1891, Morris established the Kelmscott Press in Hammersmith, producing exquisitely designed books in which the typefaces, woodblock illustrations, and materials were designed for their aesthetic integra-

tion and ease of production. Morris’s most ambitious project was *The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, produced in 1894. Its illustrations, display type blocks, and carved initials were integrated through size relationships, and its layouts conformed to an overall predetermined structure that dramatically unified the pages and allowed for faster production. This book signaled a transition from medieval block manuscript (which paradoxically provides its aesthetic framework) to modern page layout, where multiple types of information are integrated into an articulated space.

— The Arts and Crafts movement gained momentum and was transformed in a number of ways—evolving into the sensuously organic style known as Art Nouveau in France; as the painterly, more architectural Jugendstil in Germany and Belgium—as designers became accustomed to the effects of industrialization. They sought new forms of expression that would speak to the spirit of the age.

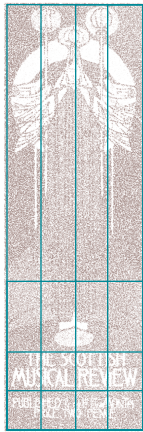
THE ARCHITECTURE OF SPACE

Influenced by a trip to England, the work of American architect Frank Lloyd Wright began a systematic evolution away from the organic while continuing to embody the same Arts and Crafts ideals. Like Philip Webb, Wright’s work expressed a view that space was the essence of design, in which “the part is to

the whole as the whole is to the part, and which is all devoted to a purpose.” Proportional relationships, rectangular zones, and asymmetrical organization became guiding principles of what was becoming Modernism. A group of Scottish collaborators—two sisters, Frances and Margaret McDonald, and their husbands, James MacNair and Charles Rennie Macintosh, who had met as students at the Glasgow School of Art—translated the medieval flair of Arts and Crafts into more abstract and geometric articulations of space. They became known as the Glasgow Four, and publication of their work in book arts and furniture design in the periodical *The Studio* popularized their ideas as far away as Vienna, Austria, and Hamburg, Germany.

AN EXPANDING INFLUENCE

Peter Behrens, an aspiring young German architect, grew up in Hamburg under this new influence, as well as that of the Viennese Secession, a countermovement that drew its inspiration from the Glasgow Four and Wright. The Secession distinguished itself with even more rectilinear approaches to poster and book design, as well as architecture. Designers and architects like Josef Hoffman, Koloman Moser, and Josef Maria Olbrich pursued functional simplicity and eschewed decoration. In 1900, Peter Behrens moved to



Scottish Musical Review / Poster  
After Frances Macdonald  
Author’s schematic recreation

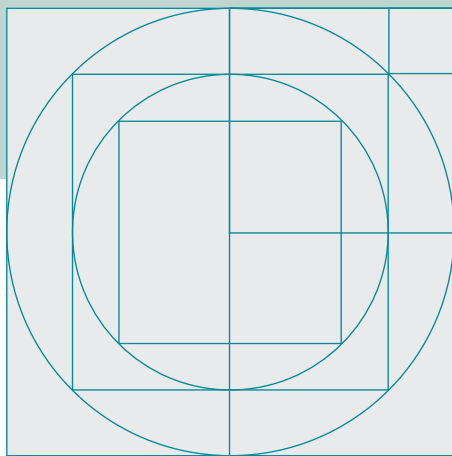


Modular Page Constructions / Book Design  
After Josef Hofmann and Koloman Moser  
Author’s schematic recreation



an artists' colony in Darmstadt, established by the Grand Duke of Hesse. One of the other seven artists invited by the Grand Duke and given land to build a house was Josef Maria Olbrich. Through the effort of designing his house and all of its contents, Behrens—like Morris, and in close aesthetic alignment with Olbrich—found himself caught up in the same rational movement that sought order and unity among the arts.

Along with industrial design and furniture, he also experimented with book layout and the new sans serif typefaces that were beginning to appear from foundries like Berthold. His first book, *Celebration of Life and Art*, is believed to be the first running text set in a sans serif face. Although this book maintains a block-manuscript approach to the composition of the page, it follows in the footsteps of Morris's spatially conceived works of Chaucer and lays important groundwork for grid development in its use of sans serif type. The more uniform texture of sans serif letterforms creates a neutrality within the text that emphasizes its shape against the surrounding white space; placement and interval assume greater visual importance.



**Square and Circle / Structure Diagram**  
After J.L. Mathieu Lauwerijks  
Author's schematic recreation

Behrens moved to Düsseldorf in 1903 to direct that city's School of Arts and Crafts, developing preparatory curricula that focused on fundamental visual principals and the analysis of compositional structure. 1904 was a pivotal year for Behrens and the school, when Dutch architect J. L. Mathieu Lauweriks joined the faculty. Lauweriks had evolved a systematic approach to teaching composition based on the dissection of a circle by a square, creating a grid of proportional spaces. Behrens saw that this system could be used to unify proportions within architecture and graphic design; in 1906, he applied this theory to his exhibition pavilion and poster for the Anchor Linoleum Company.

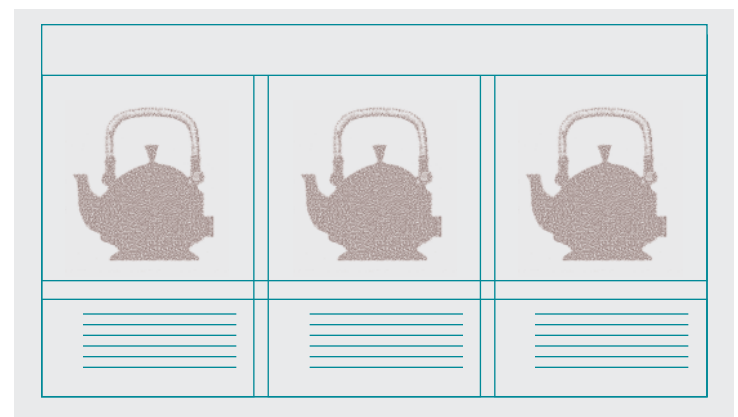
#### **RATIONALISM AND THE MACHINE AESTHETIC**

In 1907, Behrens received a landmark design commission from the German electrical works, AEG, to be the company's artistic advisor. At the same time, he participated in the launching of the Deutsche Werkbund, or German Association of Craftsmen. Inspired by Morris but embracing, rather than rebelling against, the machine, the Werkbund sought to invent a universal culture through the design of everyday objects and furnishings. Behrens's industrial-design projects through the Werkbund coincided with his association with AEG. In addition to designing AEG's

teakettles and lighting fixtures, he also designed their visual identity, the first known design system for an industrial corporation. Beginning with its logo, he designed a company typeface, color schemes, posters, advertisements, salesrooms, and manufacturing facilities. Every item was articulated over a specific set of proportions and linear elements, organizing AEG's visual presentation into a harmonic whole.

#### **CONSTRUCTIVISM**

The new visual language and its philosophy were attracting students and designers from abroad, as well as finding sympathetic participants. Russia's political upheaval of the early 1900s found a voice in abstraction: a movement rooted in pure geometry, called Suprematism, merged with Cubism and Futurism to generate Constructivism, an expression of Russia's quest for a new order. Seeking out instruction in Germany, a young Russian Constructivist, El (Lazar Markovich) Lissitsky, found himself in Darmstadt studying architecture, absorbing the rationalist aesthetic that was prevalent there. His studies kept him in Western Europe throughout World War I and for the duration of the Russian Revolution. In 1919, while the Bolsheviks were fighting for domination in the post-Tsarist civil war, Lissitsky went home and



**Product Sell-Sheet / AEG Identity System**  
After Peter Behrens  
Author's schematic recreation

applied himself to politically driven graphic design that was characterized by dynamic, geometrically organized composition. His seminal poster, *Beat the Whites with the Red Wedge*, epitomizes the abstract communicative power of form and typifies the work of the Russian avant-garde from this period.

#### THE BAUHAUS AND THE NEW ORDER

As the war in Europe ended, designers and architects turned their attention to rebuilding and moving forward. In Germany, the 1919 reopening of the formerly prestigious Weimar Arts and Crafts School began with the appointment of architect Walter Gropius, one of Peter Behrens's former apprentices, as its new director. Gropius recast the school as the *Staatliches Bauhaus*—the State Home for Building. Here, experimentation and rationalism became the tools for building the

new social order. Although the curriculum initially drew on expressionism—influenced by the *Blaue Reiter* painters who developed the preliminary training courses, Johannes Itten and Wassily Kandinsky—it gradually moved away from the personal and painterly.

— The Bauhaus students and faculty came under the influence of the Swiss painter Theo van Doesburg, whose *de Stijl* movement followed a strict dogma of geometry. Van Doesburg made contact with Gropius in 1920, and although Gropius decided against hiring him because of his overt dogma, van Doesburg contributed significantly to the aesthetic change in the Bauhaus by moving to Weimar and hosting discussions and lectures.

— Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, a Hungarian Constructivist, eventually replaced Itten as head of the preliminary course in 1923. In the type shop, Moholy's experimentation

with asymmetrical layouts, photomontage, and elements from the type case expanded the geometric expression of Modernism in graphic design. Moholy and his students—in particular, Herbert Bayer—used bars, rules, squares, and type asymmetrically composed on a grid as the basis of a new typography. Lissitsky returned from Russia numerous times, establishing contact with the Bauhaus and participating in lectures, book designs, and exhibitions. His 1924 book, *The Isms of Art*, is a watershed in grid development. Separated by heavy rules, the concurrently running text in three languages is organized into columns; images, captions, and folios are integrated into the overall structure, placed according to a distinct set of orthogonal alignments.

— As pervasive as these developments in design seem, they had yet to be assimilated into mainstream design practice. The use



*Kandinsky: Jubiläums-Ausstellung* / Poster  
Herbert Bayer  
©2003 Artists Rights Society (ARS) New York/  
V.G. Bild-Kunst, Bonn



of asymmetric composition, sans serif typefaces, and geometric organization of information were known to a relative few in the arts and education. For the most part, the commercial world was oblivious. Developments in American and European advertising had helped introduce columnar composition into production of newspapers and periodicals; most printers and designers, however, were still visually in the nineteenth century.

### DISSEMINATING ASYMMETRY

A young calligrapher, Jan Tschichold, changed that. While working as a staff designer for the German publisher Insel Verlag, Tschichold happened upon the first Bauhaus exhibition of 1923. Within a year he had assimilated the school's typographic approach and abstract sensibility. In 1925, he designed a twenty-four-page insert for the *Typographische Mitteilungen*, a German printers' magazine, which demonstrated these ideas to a large audience of typesetters, designers, and printers. *Elementare Typographie*, as it was titled, generated a tremendous enthusiasm for asymmetric and grid-based layout. Tschichold advocated a reductive and intrinsically functional aesthetic. He asserted

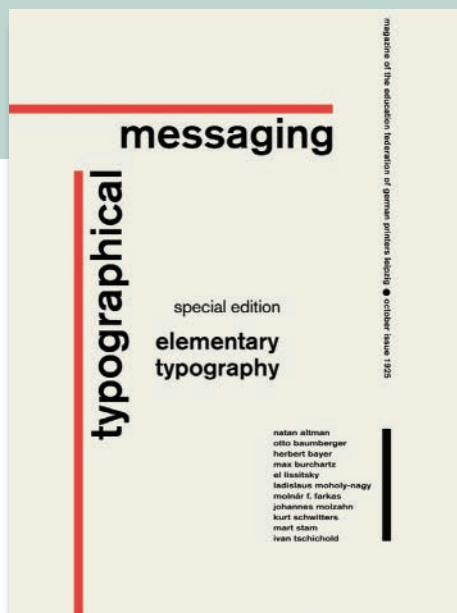
that stripping away ornament, giving priority to sans serif type that made the structure of letterforms explicit, and creating compositions based on the verbal function of words were goals that would liberate the modern age. Negative spaces, the intervals between areas of text, and the orientation of words to each other formed the basis for design consideration. Taking his cues from Lissitzky and the Bauhaus, he deliberately built his compositions on a system of vertical and horizontal alignments, introducing hierarchical grid structure in documents from posters to letterheads. As early as 1927, the year before he published his landmark book *Die Neue Typographie* (The New Typography), Tschichold codified this idea of structure and advocated its use to standardize printing formats. The current European DIN (*Deutsches Institut für Normung*, the German Institute for Standardization) system of paper formats—in which each format, folded in half, yields the next-smaller format—is based on this system.

### TOWARD NEUTRALITY

The developing design aesthetic in Europe was abruptly sidetracked, however, in the 1930s. Designers and artists who used the new visual language were arrested or forced to leave as the Nazis gained power and labeled them degenerates. The Bauhaus



officially closed in 1932, and Moholy-Nagy, Gropius, Mies van der Rohe (Peter Behrens's other apprentice from before WWI), Bayer, and others left the continent for America; Tschichold, after being arrested and held by the Nazis for a short period, moved to Switzerland, which remained neutral and generally unaffected by the war; its mountainous terrain and iron grip on international banking kept it safe from being overrun by the Nazis. \_\_\_\_ Along with Tschichold, several Bauhaus students had come to Switzerland. Max Bill, who had begun school at the *Kunstgewerbeschule* in Zurich and had studied at the Bauhaus between 1927 and 1929, returned home in 1930; as did Theo Ballmer, another Bauhaus student who worked in the type shop. Their influence was strong. Swiss designers had been steadily developing a tradition that emphasized reductive techniques and symbolic representation, epitomized by the work of *plakatsijl* designer Ernst Keller.



*Elementaire Typographie* / Insert Cover  
After Jan Tschichold  
Author's schematic recreation, presented  
in English translation

*Die Neue Grafik* [New Graphic Design]/  
Periodical cover / Hierarchy schematic  
After Josef Müller-Brockmann,  
Richard Paul Lohse, and Carlo Vivarelli  
Author's schematic recreation



Ballmer and Bill instigated a transition toward constructive ideas through work based on strict mathematical measurement and spatial division. Max Bill's contribution was twofold: first, by applying his math-based theories to professional projects in advertising and corporate identity; and second, by instituting the grid through helping to found the influential Ulm School of Applied Arts in Germany in 1950. Bill's work and teaching would help to ingrain the grid in generations of designers.

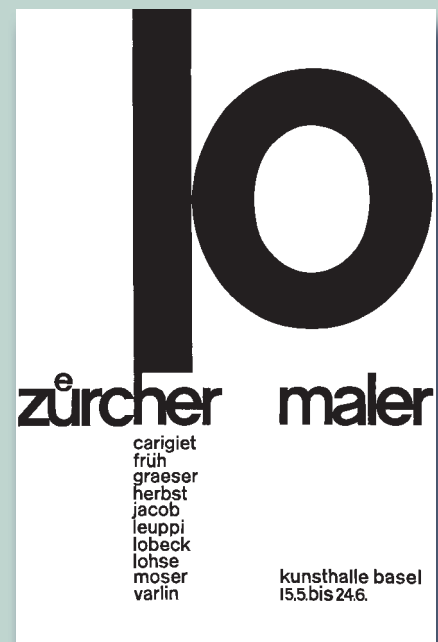
## THE WILL TO ORDER

This more austere approach was taken up by Josef Müller-Brockmann, Carlo Vivarelli, Hans Neuberg, and Richard Paul Lohse who, in their individual practices, were actively seeking a universal visual expression. As editors of the Zurich-published *Neue Grafik*, they collaborated in exposing this international style to the rest of the world. The grid created for

*Neue Grafik* contained four columns and three horizontal bands, or spatial zones, which organized all of the content, including images. When it was first iterated, *Neue Grafik* marked a development in grid-based design that was already in the making: the realization of a module—a small unit of space which, through repetition, integrates all parts of a page.

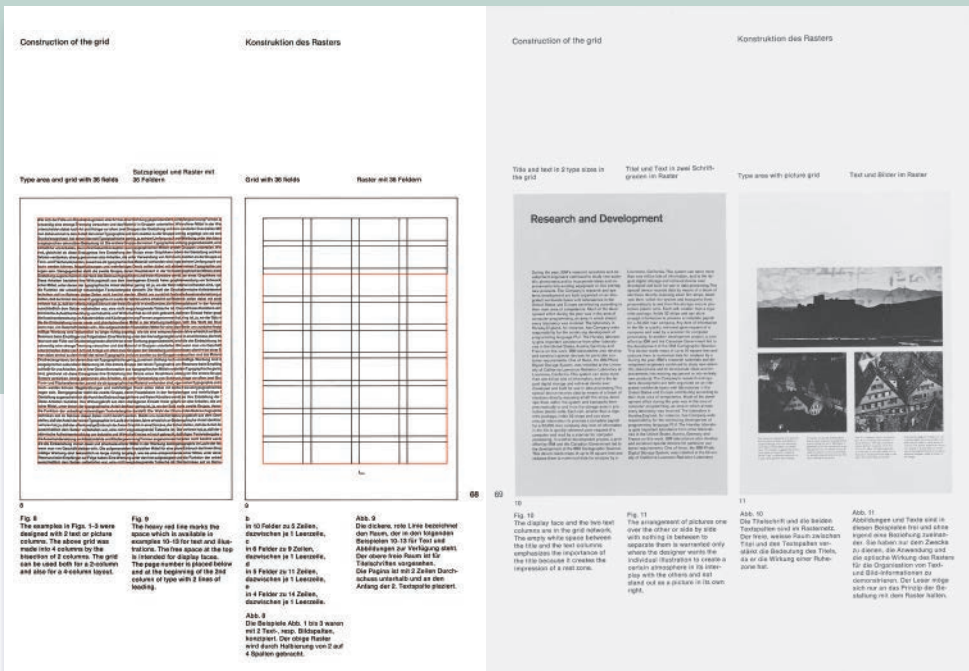
\_\_\_\_ Müller-Brockmann forsook imagery in favor of pure constructions of type based on grids. In 1960, he published his first book, *The Graphic Artist and His Design Problems*, in which he first describes this form of grid-based design. His second book, *Grid Systems in Graphic Design*, is nothing short of a manifesto: “The grid system implies the will to systematize, to clarify, the will to penetrate to the essentials ... the will to cultivate objectivity rather than subjectivity.”

\_\_\_\_ The rational Zurich aesthetic represents the Swiss International Style with which most



designers are familiar. In contrast, designers associated with Basel's *Allgemeine Gewerbeschule* (or School of Design) pursued an approach that, although grounded in a similar notion of universality, focused on symbolic form and contrasting optical qualities in abstraction. The Basel approach would come to play a more significant role in an eventual shift away from grid-based approaches (see pages 128–129). Integrating type with image was fundamental to the school's curriculum, however. In 1942, Zurich-trained Emil Ruder joined the AGS as a typography teacher.

\_\_\_ Ruder advocated a balance between function and nuanced formal relationships; grid structure was one of a number of these. His methodology instilled an exhaustive



**Grid Systems in Graphic Design / Book spread**  
Josef Müller-Brockmann  
Originally published by Niggli Verlag,  
Zurich, 1962

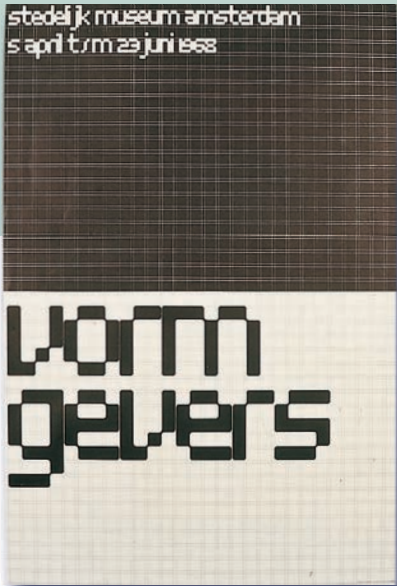
**Zürcher Maler [Zurich Painters] / Poster**  
Emil Ruder  
*Reproduced from Typography,*  
*published by Niggli Verlag, Zurich, 1960*

process of visual problem solving in his students—one of whom was Karl Gerstner, who formed his own practice in Zurich and contributed to the evolution of the grid into a mainstay of modern design practice. In 1968, Gerstner published his first book, *Designing Programmes*. “The typographic grid,” he wrote, “is a proportional guideline for text, tables, pictures, etc. It is a formal program, a priori for ‘x’ unknown contents. The problem: to find the balance between a maximum of conformity with a maximum of freedom. Or: the highest number of constants combined with the greatest possible variability.”

THE CORPORATE GRID

Grid use began to dominate European and American design during and after the 1960s. It was an especially effective way to orchestrate communications programs for large organizations, events, or corporations. The German designer Otl Aicher implemented a program of even greater precision for Lufthansa, the German airline. Collaborating with Tomás Gonda, Fritz Quereng, and

Nick Roericht, Aicher anticipated Lufthansa’s every potential need, standardizing formats and rigorously enforcing the grid to unify communications of different scale, materials, and production constraints. Detailed manuals ensured visual uniformity in every application. \_\_\_\_ Max Bill, Müller-Brockmann, Otl Aicher, and other exponents of the International Style were joined in their efforts by their Dutch, English, Italian, and American counterparts. In the Netherlands, the movement toward program-oriented design was spearheaded by Wim Crouwel, Ben Bos, and Bruno Wissing, whose firm Total Design became a model in its practice of grid-based communications programs for corporations and cultural institutions. In America, students of the Swiss schools and a number of European emigrants brought the International Style—and the grid—to a vast audience. Paul Rand, the pioneer of Modern design in America in the early 1940s, had been instrumental in convincing business that design was good for them. In his 1965 design manuals for Westinghouse, Rand developed complex grids to ensure continuity in such diverse media as packaging, print advertising, and television. \_\_\_\_ The idea of a totality in design, based on a grid, also found expression in the work of Massimo Vignelli and his wife, Lella, who had founded an office for design in Milan in 1960.



Worm Gevers [Designers] / Poster  
Wim Crouwel  
Courtesy of Total Design, Amsterdam

UniGrid / Publication system  
Vignelli Associates  
Courtesy of Massimo Vignelli

Piccolo Teatro di Milano / Poster  
Massimo Vignelli  
Courtesy of Massimo Vignelli





extensive exploration of grid structures for various cultural organizations and corporate entities in Milan. These early projects guided Vignelli toward an approach that focused on dividing space within a modular grid into semantically distinct, horizontal zones. The additional system of division—given visual weight in the form of solid bands—allowed greater focus within the overall modular structure; the eye could be taught to direct itself to find specific information.

\_\_\_ The Vignellis were instrumental in cementing grid-based design philosophy throughout the 1960s, 70s, and 80s through a variety of endeavors in corporate identity, publication and book design, and interiors: From helping found the design collaborative Unimark International in 1965, which standardized communications for a legion of corporate giants (among them Xerox, J.C. Penney, Alcoa, Ford, and Steelcase); to creating the Unigrd system for the U.S. National Park Service—which established a modular grid, divided by horizontal bands

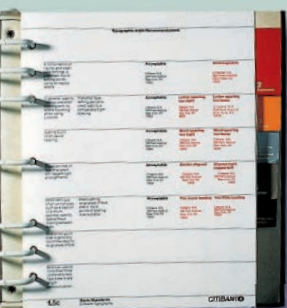
and encompassing twelve formats that could be imposed on a single standard-sized sheet of paper to reduce waste; to systematizing the New York City subway's map and signage system, along with hundreds of other corporate and cultural projects they completed as Vignelli Associates.

\_\_\_ By the late 1970s, formatting corporate communications in a grid was an expected approach to achieving visual continuity. Corporate identity firms like Anspach Grossman Portugal in New York City typified this approach with its 1976 identity program for Citibank and similar corporate clients. The International Style had come to be an accepted part of what graphic design was about, and the grid an important tool that is intrinsic to effective communication.

\_\_\_ Amidst a proliferation of new approaches that owes some debt to the digital revolution of the 1980s and 90s, the British design group 8vo helped reestablish awareness of structural thinking through their periodical journal *Octavo*, which addressed typographical issues in a series of eight editions;

newer firms like MetaDesign, Una, and Method have steadfastly continued to investigate organizational methods that derive from the International Style. In the wake of the transition into the twenty-first century, the use of grids that developed over the last 150 years has continued to play a significant role in design thinking. The Internet has proven to be a medium that can benefit from grid-based thinking as a way of simplifying the vertiginous act of navigating through interactive information; indeed, in the time since this book was first published, grid use has become pervasive within UX design.

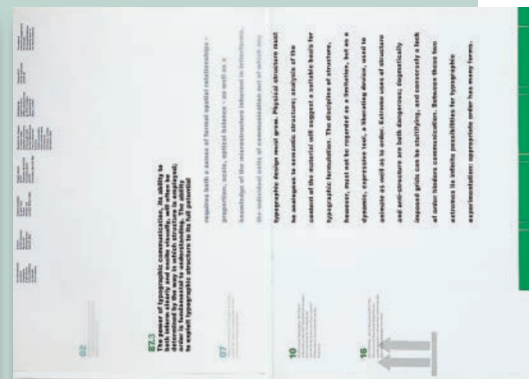
\_\_\_ How media and design will develop over the next 150 years is difficult to imagine, given its recent pace—but the typographic grid is likely to help designers structure communications for some time to come.



**Citibank / Identity manual pages**  
Anspach Grossman Portugal  
Courtesy of Enterprise IG



**Design in Michigan / Poster, from a series**  
Katherine McCoy  
Courtesy of Katherine McCoy



**Octavo / Publication**  
8vo  
Courtesy of Simon Johnston



**elnacional.cat / Online news site**  
Atlas, Balearic Islands, Spain  
Courtesy of Atlas

A grid consists of a distinct set of alignment-based relationships that serves as a guide for distributing elements across a format: where they may be placed; their height-to-width proportions; and, ultimately, the ease with which a viewer can navigate the layout. A grid's *orthogonal* (90° axis) logic, and all the thinking about how to work with it, derive from the fundamental verbivisual qualities of type. Choosing or developing a grid for a project depends on understanding these qualities, knowing what kinds of grids there are, and the possibilities for how type (and images) might interact within the structure.

Although grids may seem overtly mathematical, the notion of this structural approach grows quite organically from the nature of typographic form.

At its most fundamental level, type is a system of vertical lines (these being the primary element of all the letters in the Western alphabet). Sequenced side by side to form words, and then sentences, the verticals form a horizontal line. Stacking horizontal sentences below each other creates a new vertical line—the column—and columns appearing side by side establish yet another horizontal structure.

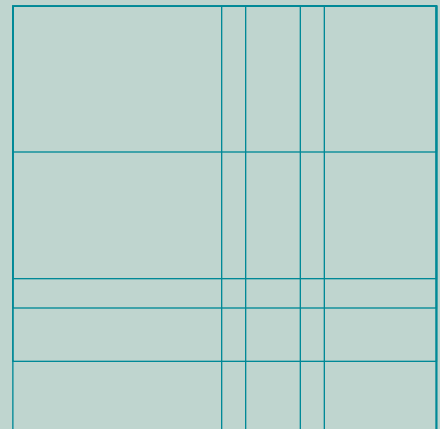
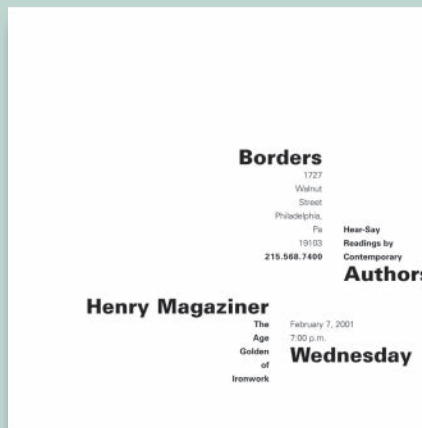
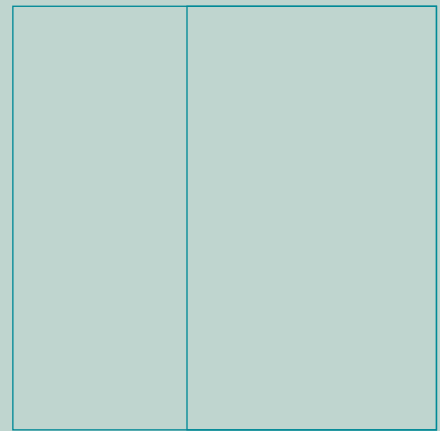
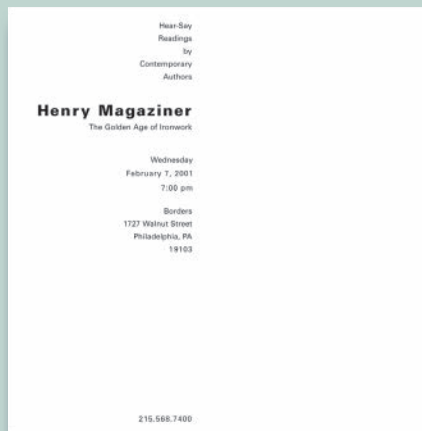


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Within the format, alignments between elements create structure. In these compositions, space is divided based on content: like information is grouped together, disparate information is separated; their resulting widths and heights subdivide the surrounding field. Changes in weight and scale introduce hierarchy—visual ordering—to the information. Groupings may give rise to a single axis that divides the space into two simple fields, as in the example at top; or they may establish numerous axes and, hence, more complex subdivisions. Within strict limitations, an enormous variety of possible layouts can be imagined. These, for example, both use the same type family and only a selection of possible sizes.



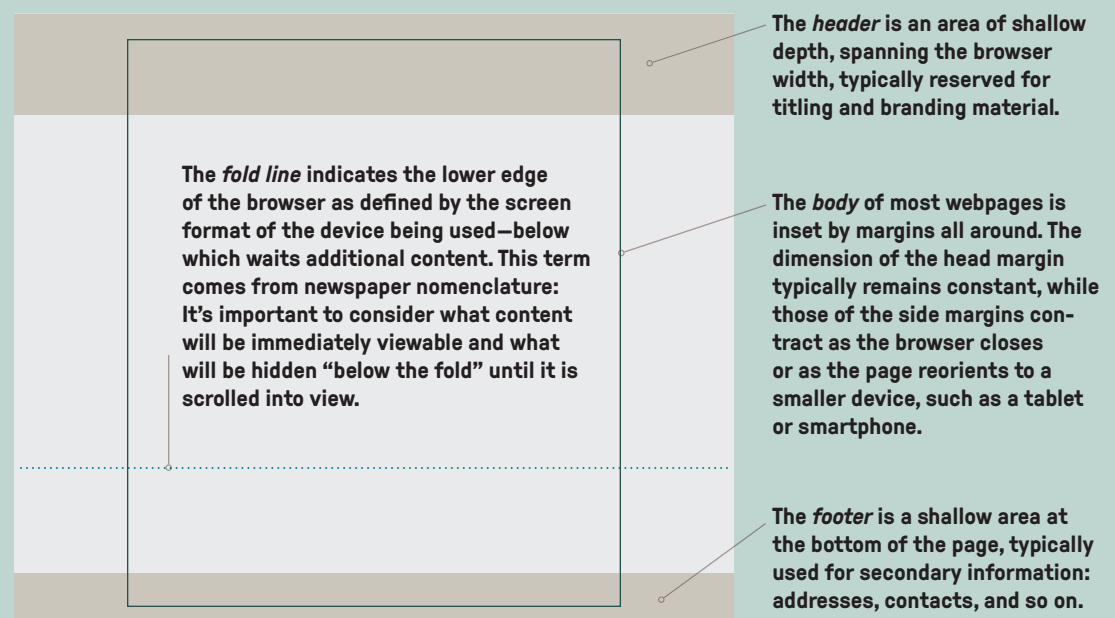
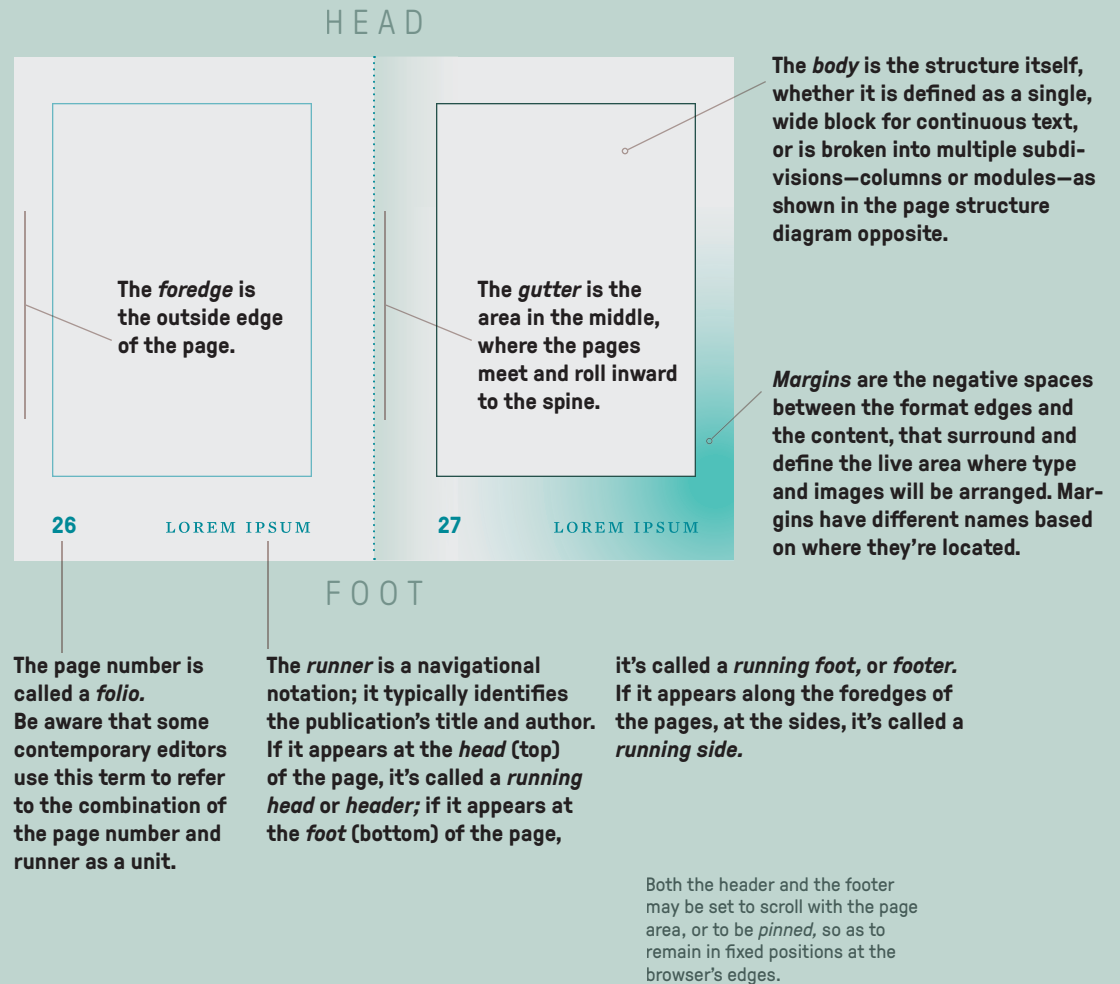
Typographic space is governed by the part-to-whole relationships that alignments define but, more importantly, by the relation of positive and negative they create. Thinking structurally about layouts means being able to see not only the forms, or positive elements, but negative spaces—"white space," as it's often called—as shapes of equal importance in the composition. A grid organizes space as much as it does the stuff that's in it. In this book spread, the negative spaces actively enhance the up-and-down vertical rhythm of columns as a counterpoint to the strong horizontal axis that links various column parts together across the spread; being mostly horizontal in proportion, they echo that quality of the image.

Timothy Samara / USA

## Format Structures

All page-layout conventions descend from the book format that developed between the fall of the Roman Empire in 476 CE and the European Renaissance of the 15th century. Its predecessor was the *codex*, a scroll folded accordion-style to fit neatly between protective boards. A rolled scroll presented a continuous field of text, but the *codex* necessitated breaks in text to prevent it from traveling over the folded foreedges—hence, the familiar block of text, surrounded by open space, as well as left and right sides, eventually resulting in what we recognize as pages. A left-hand page and a right-hand page together define a *spread*. Over time, the components of the book format page structure evolved to become more complex, all denoted by specific terms.

In the Web's early days, programming limitations meant a page could be subdivided into simple, table-based fields to differentiate content from navigation, or areas of different content. Nowadays, everything is possible, so book-format conventions have at last come to the fore. A webpage is, after all, just another editorial medium. Current Web formats define margins around a body that emphasizes columns, rather than rows, as a way of controlling alignment relationships that will accommodate responsiveness (see more about the section Building a Grid: For Interaction Design, pp. 56–59).

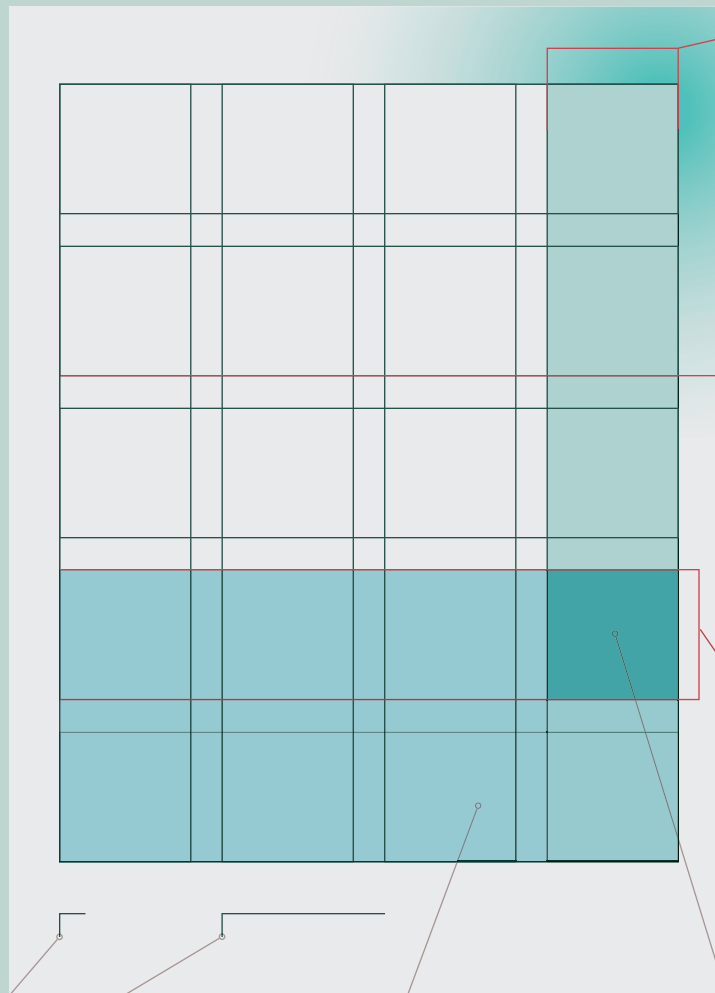


## Page Structure

A grid, in essence, is what happens inside the margins of an individual page, within the body.

Contemporary page design conventions consider diminished margins in order to maximize the body, accommodating more content and subdividing it for greater control.

Every grid contains the same basic parts, no matter how complex the grid becomes. These parts can be combined as needed or omitted from the overall structure at the designer's discretion, and the proportions of the parts are similarly dependent on the designer's needs.



**Columns** are vertical alignments of type that create horizontal divisions between the outside margins. There can be any number of columns; sometimes they are all the same width, and sometimes they are different widths. Each column is separated from its neighbors by a channel of space called a *column gutter*.

**Flowlines** are alignments that break the space into horizontal bands. Flowlines help guide the eye across the format and can be used to impose additional stopping and starting points for text or images. There may be one flowline or several.

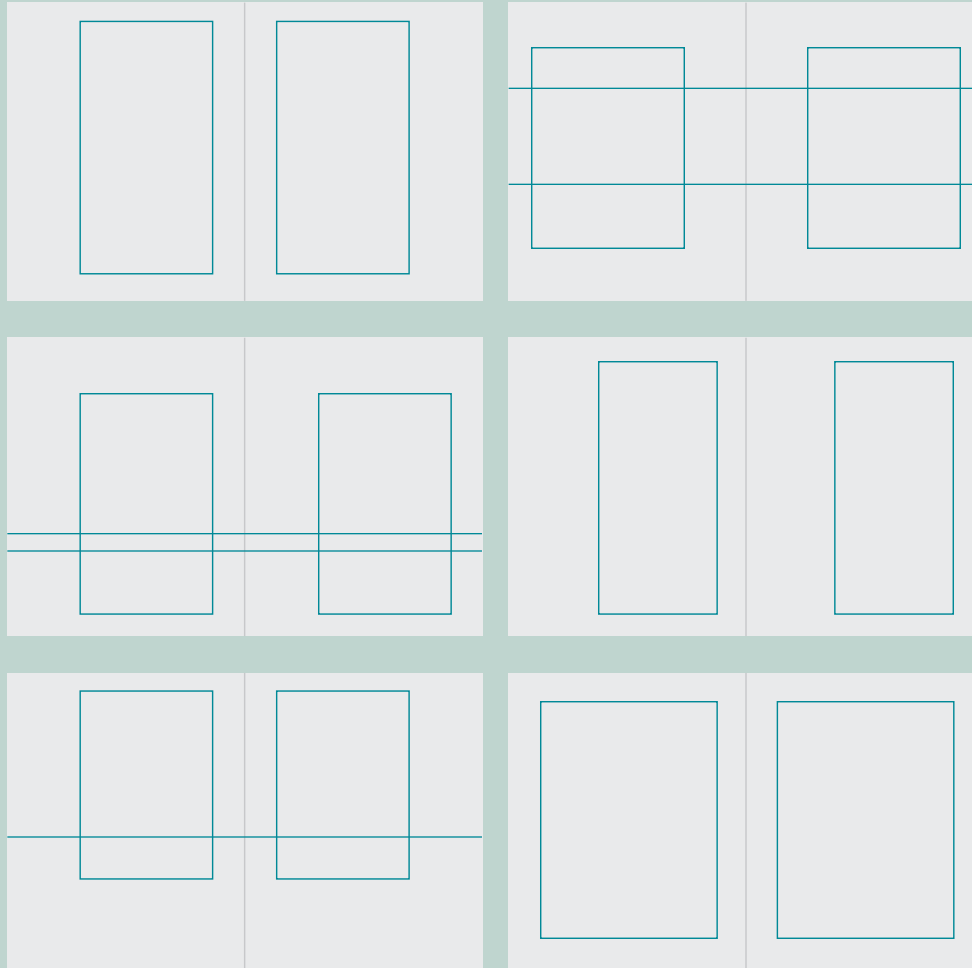
**Rows** result from numerous flowlines set at regular, repeated intervals from head margin to foot margin. Such horizontal rows intersect the vertical columns, further subdividing space and creating a counterpoint to the columns' vertical emphasis. Rows also are separated by channels of space, the *row gutters*.

**Markers** are placement indicators for subordinate or consistently appearing text, such as running heads, section titles, folios, or any other element that consistently occupies only one location in any sequence or series of layouts.

**Spatial zones** are groups of columns, rows, and/or modules that form distinct fields. Each field can be assigned a specific role for displaying information; for example, one horizontal field might be reserved for images, and the field below it might be reserved for a series of text columns.

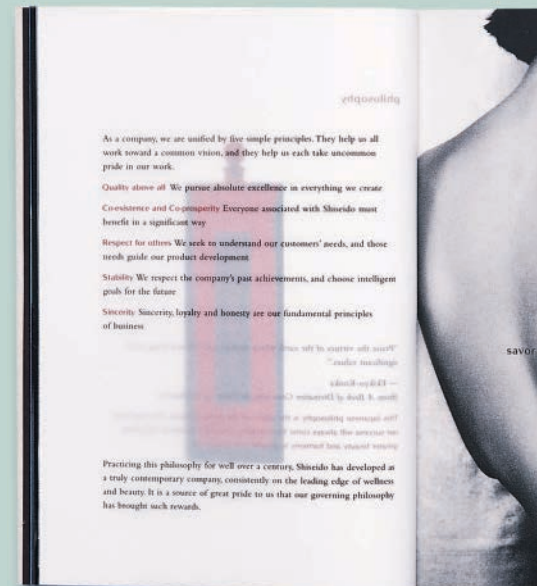
**Modules** are individual units of space created by the intersection of columns and rows. Considered another way: columns and rows result from a grouping of modules.





These manuscript grid diagrams show the range of content distribution possible even with such a simple structure. The size of the text block may vary, relative to the size of the page; the margins surrounding it may be even, or dramatically different in width—causing the

block to sit high or low on the page, closer to the gutter or further away, toward the foreedges. Further, the margins may situate the text blocks symmetrically or asymmetrically across the page gutter. Adding a flowline offers the possibility of separating titling or other elements.



The text block on this page detail of a cosmetics brochure is set low on the page, with an extremely deep head margin. Text seen on both sides of the translucent page—broken at specific intervals—suggests the presence of flowlines.

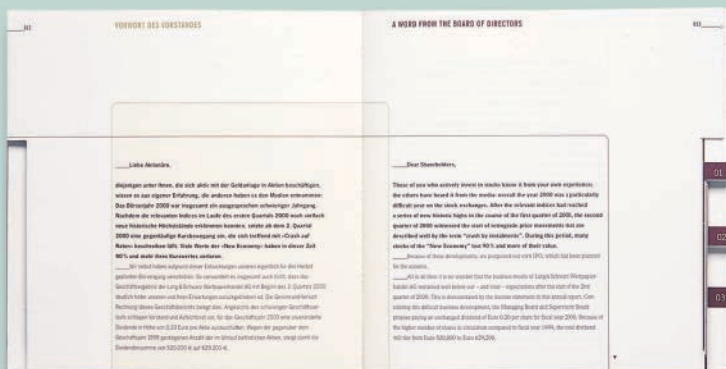
Tolleson Design / USA

The block, or manuscript, grid is structurally the simplest kind of grid: It consists of a single, relatively large text block on each page of a spread, and its purpose is to accommodate extensive continuous text, like a book or long essay. An occasional image may be situated within the text area if need be; if the margins are ample, they may provide a place for notes, spot illustrations, or other editorial features that don't occur regularly and, therefore, don't really warrant the articulation of additional columns.

\_\_\_ As its name implies, the manuscript grid developed from the tradition of written

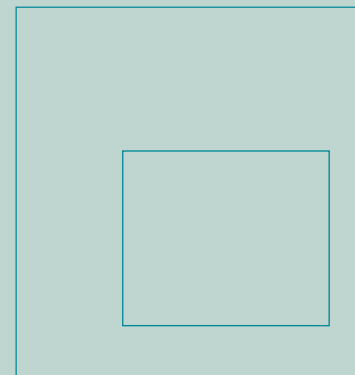
manuscript that led to book printing, and so carries with it a kind of classical quality that viewers will often interpret as historical, authoritative, institutional, or formal—a consideration that might be useful for one kind of project, but contrary to the goals of another that aims for a more contemporary feel.





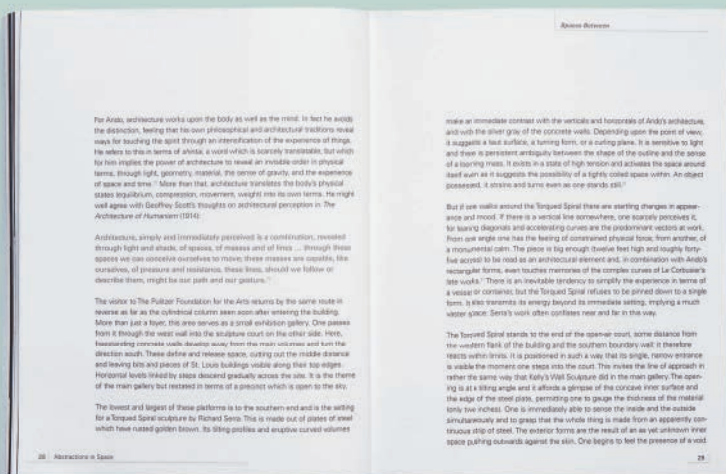
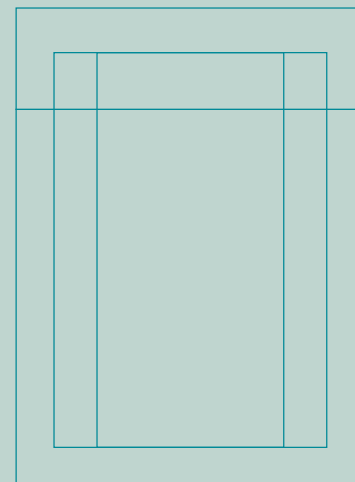
Dramatic margins, line and marker details, and strong contrasts in typographic weight create unexpected interest within this otherwise conventional manuscript grid.

In[Corporate GmbH / Germany



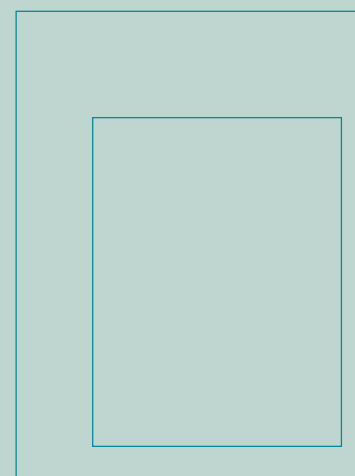
This page spread shows evidence of nested, or doubled, bodies, each with its own set of margin measures—narrower ones for actual text, and more generous ones for the grouping of photos.

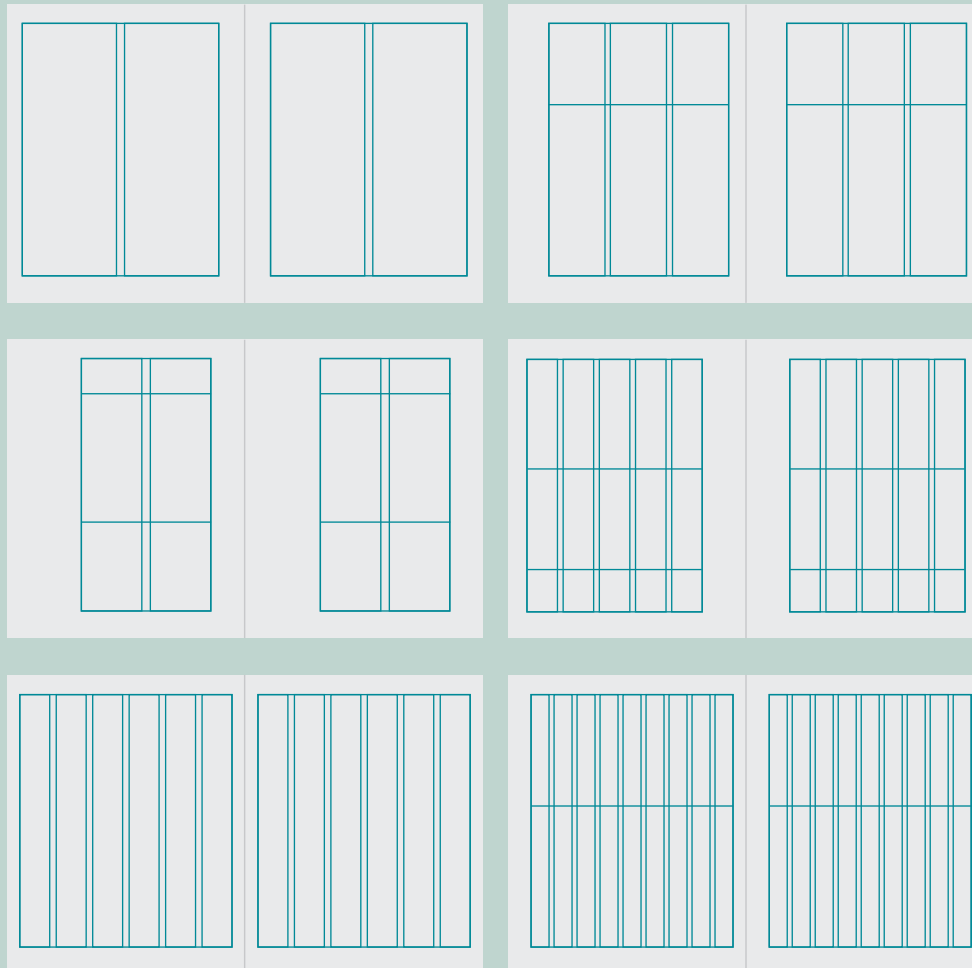
Sagmeister+Walsh / USA



The grid used for this exhibition catalogue essay spread positions the text block asymmetrical-ly on each page, in contrast to the other works shown here. Note that the folios and runners follow suit, also arranged asymmetrically relative to the spread.

Lynn Fylak / USA





The column grids diagrammed here are but a tiny fraction of the kinds of structure that fall into this category of grid.

Information that is discontinuous benefits from being organized into a grid of multiple columns. Because columns can be dependent on each other for running text, independent for small blocks of text, or crossed over to make wider columns, the column grid is very flexible and can be used to separate different kinds of information. For example, some columns may be reserved for running text and large images, while captions may be placed in an adjacent column.

\_\_\_ Although their widths must always correspond to those of one or more columns (edge to edge), both images and chunks of text

may be of any depth, and positioned freely within the margins from top to bottom of the page; a designer may choose to align them at times, or not at all. If a designer wants or needs consistent horizontal alignments—for the location of titles, as opposed to that of the beginning of text—he or she defines a flowline (or more than one) to denote a place for such alignments. The more constants needed, for whatever reason, the more flowlines to be incorporated.



Three-column grids are ubiquitous in publishing, both print and online—they're a real workhorse when it comes to flexibility, are simple to work with, and familiar to a broad audience, so easily navigated. The one shown here

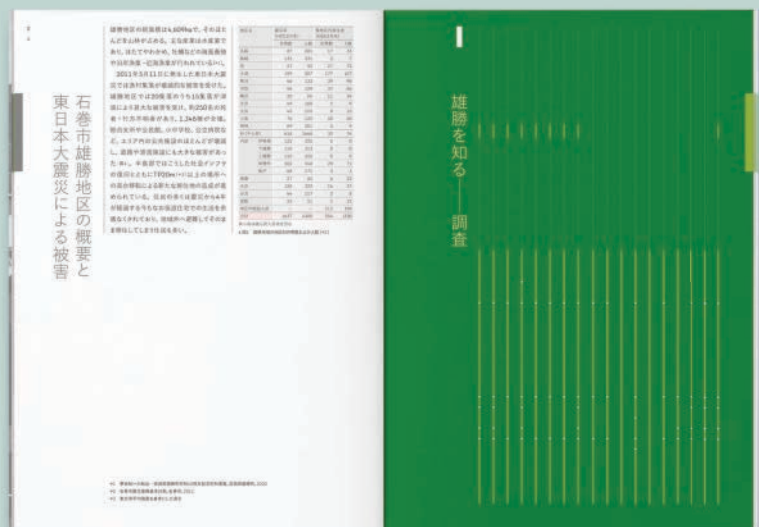
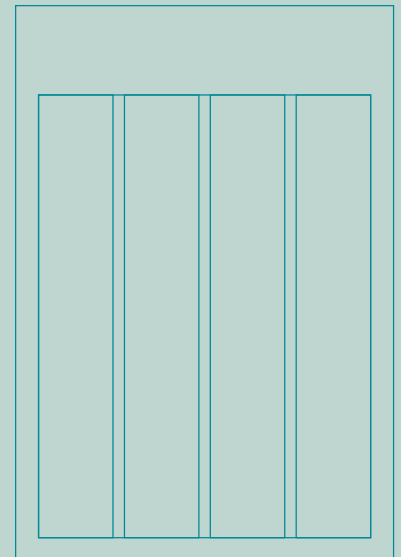
demonstrates these qualities, as well as the potential for compositional dynamism offered by this go-to structure. The presence of three strong flowlines creates horizontal emphasis in contrast to the overall verticality of the page.

Ideas On Purpose / USA



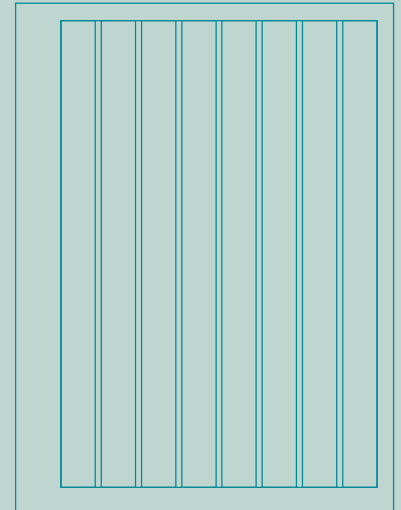
A precise four-column grid doesn't necessarily preclude dynamic layout. In this particular spread, the scale change of typographic elements is a foil to the grid.

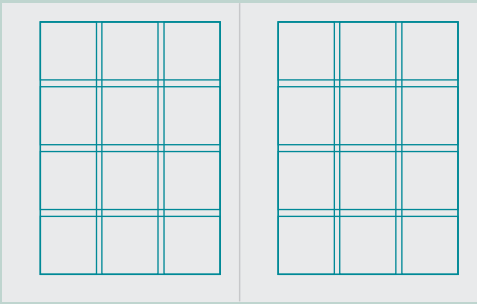
Frost\*collective / Australia



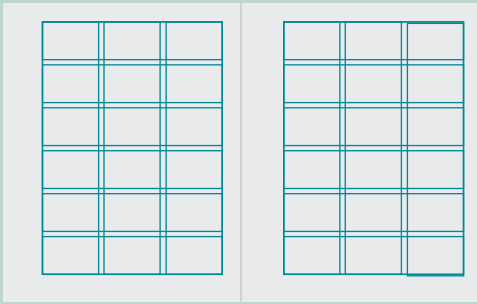
This publication also demonstrates the column grid's flexibility and usefulness for distinguishing between different kinds of information. There are 8 columns in the grid. What appears to be a wide, asymmetrical left margin is actually two of the grid's narrow columns combined. It's used for captions and callouts, while the grid's remaining six columns are divided into two groups of three—for primary text. It's important to always bear in mind that several narrower columns may be combined to create the appearance of wider ones.

Nakano Design Office / Japan

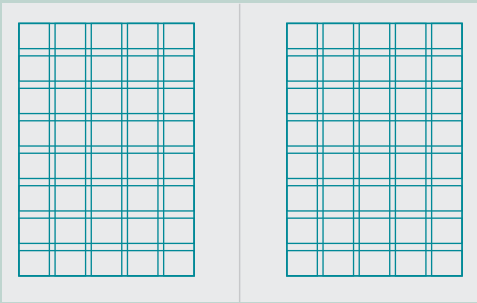




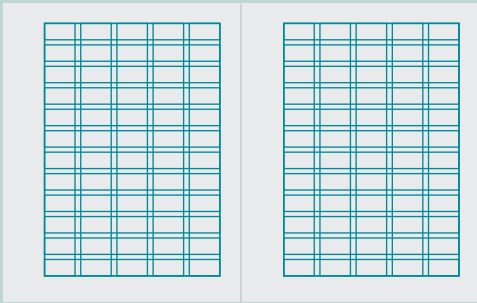
3x4 MODULAR GRID



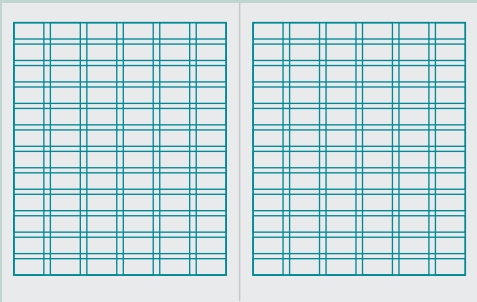
3x6 MODULAR GRID



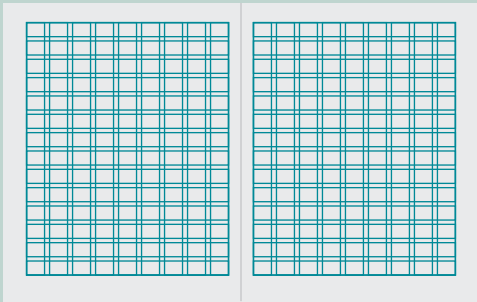
5x8 MODULAR GRID



5x12 MODULAR GRID



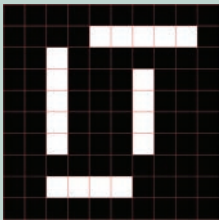
6x12 MODULAR GRID



9x14 MODULAR GRID

For extremely complex projects involving many different kinds of information, a modular grid may be the most useful choice. A modular grid is a column grid with a large number of horizontal flowlines that subdivide the columns into rows, creating a matrix of cells called modules. Each module defines a small chunk of informational space. Grouped together, these modules define larger chunks of space, all proportionally related to each other, as well as areas called spatial zones, to which specific roles may be assigned. The degree of control within the grid depends on the size of the modules. Smaller modules

provide more flexibility and greater precision, but too many subdivisions can become confusing or redundant. — Aside from its practical uses, the modular grid has developed a conceptual, aesthetic image associated with the rationalist ideals of the Bauhaus and Swiss International Style. Designers who embrace these ideals sometimes use modular grids to convey this rationalism as an interpretive overlay to a given communication—even for projects with simple informational needs.



The modular grid that holds the abstracted letters of this logo together create a maze of interlocking strokes and spaces that conceptually supports the narrative suggested by the client's name. Piscatello Design Centre / USA

Module proportions can be vertical or horizontal in proportion, and determined in a variety of ways. Modular grids are described with a notation that marks the number of columns present and the number of rows ( $C\# \times R\#$ ).

A simple modular grid provides the basic component shape and organization of these sign panels. They can be combined in any configuration, for any given need at a particular location. Poulin+Morris / USA

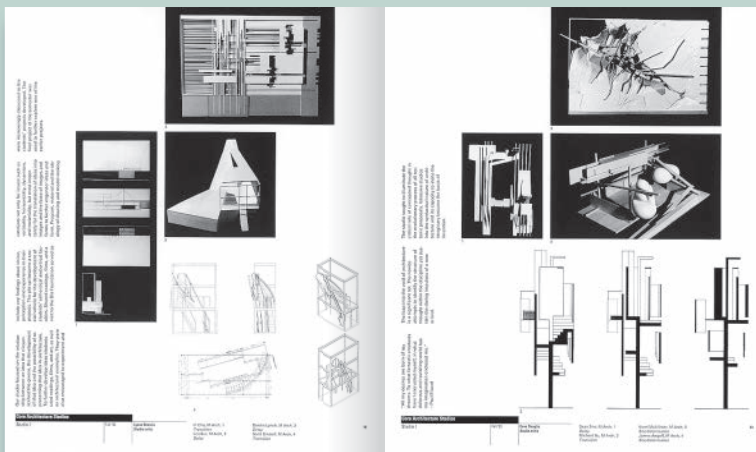
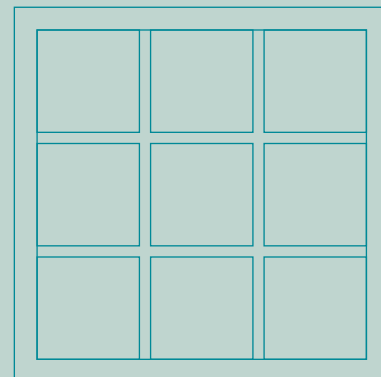






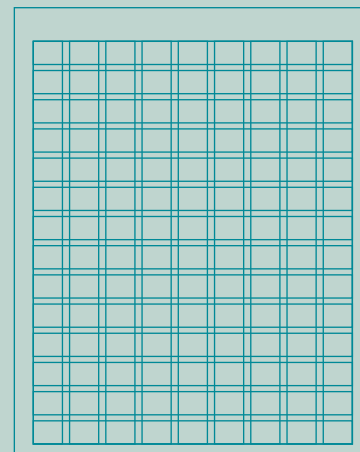
Even a simple, or “loose,” grid of three columns and three rows—referred to as a 3 x 3 modular grid—can give rise to a tremendous number of shapes in the way the modules are combined.

Why Not Associates / UK



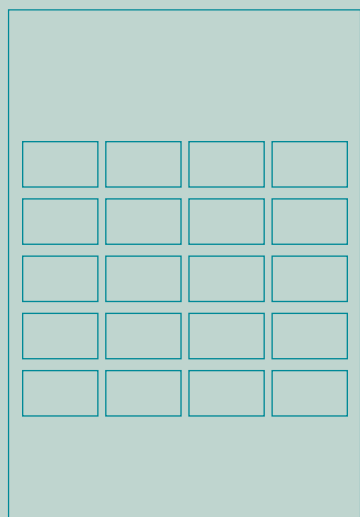
The exceptionally precise, or “tight” modular grid here consists of 9 columns and 14 rows, or 126 modules on each page. A quick glance at the spread’s layout shows a large variety of content types in a range of proportions and numerous spatial zones—with plenty of separation between each.

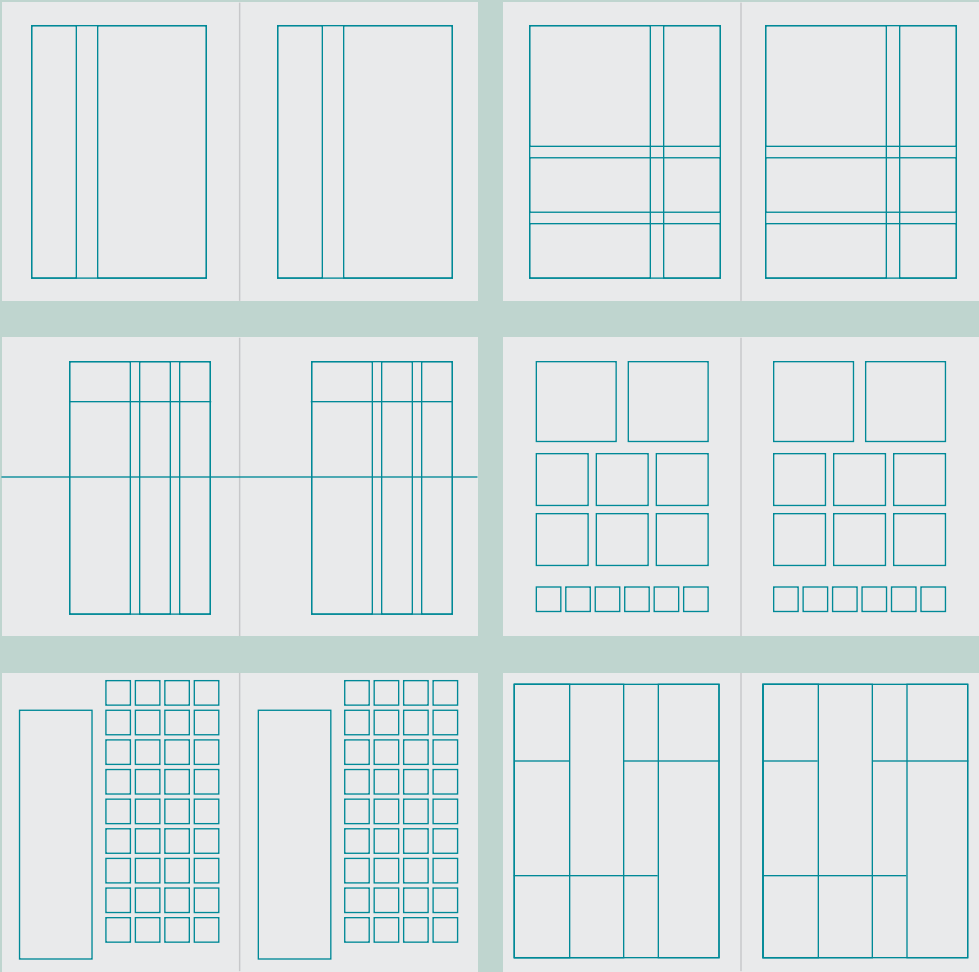
Willi Kunz Studio / USA



A modular grid also lends itself to the design of tabular information, like charts, forms, or schedules. The rigorous repetition of the module helps integrate them with the structure of surrounding text and image material.

Cahan & Associates / USA



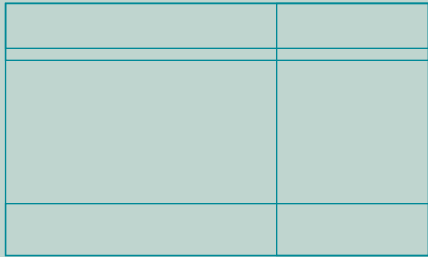
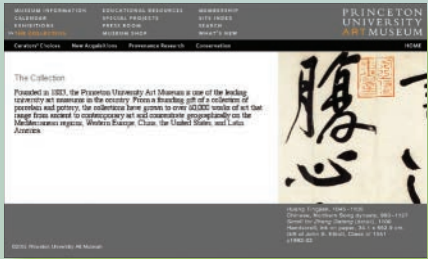


Sometimes the visual and informational needs of a project require an odd grid that doesn't fit into any category. These grids—called hierarchic grids—conform to the needs of the information they organize, but they are based more on an intuitive placement of alignments customized to the various proportions of the elements, rather than on regular repeated intervals. Column widths, as well as the intervals between them, vary depending on context and use; they may make use of several rows grouped together in only one part of a format, joined by a single column; or they may consist only of broad,

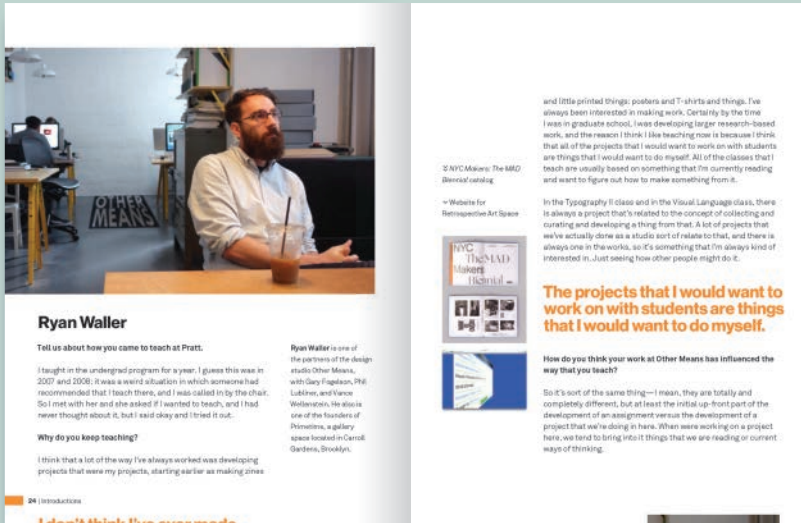
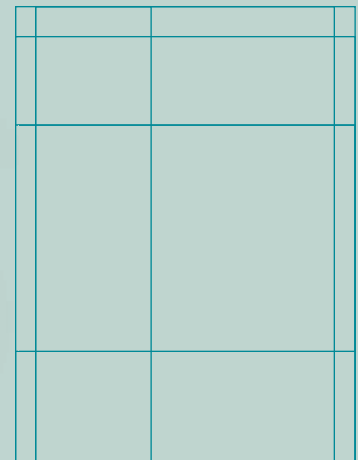
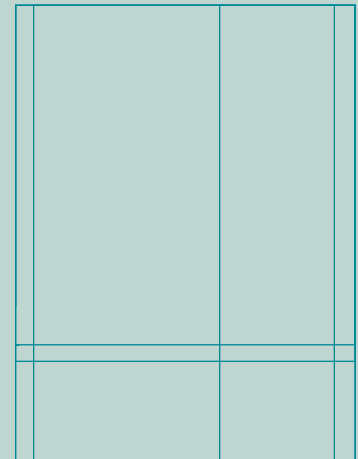
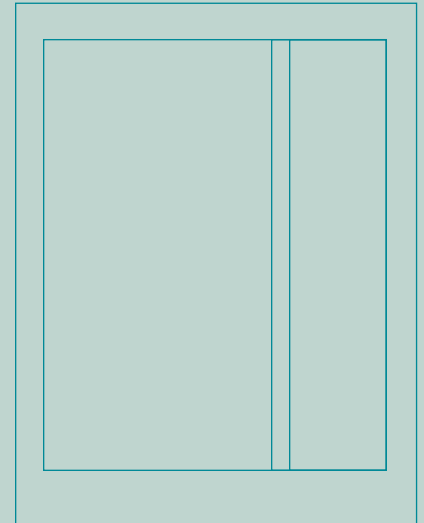
simple divisions defined by a few guidelines. Whether used to build books, posters, or webpages, it's an organic approach to ordering information in space that still holds all of the parts together architecturally with clear, orthogonal relationships.

The dynamic content of most websites requires a flexibility of width and depth that precludes a strict modular approach, but still requires a standardization, or templating, of alignments and display areas. This website for a museum breaks the page space into three major horizontal zones, and then subdivides the middle zone left to right to create areas specifically for text and image content.

Swim Design / USA



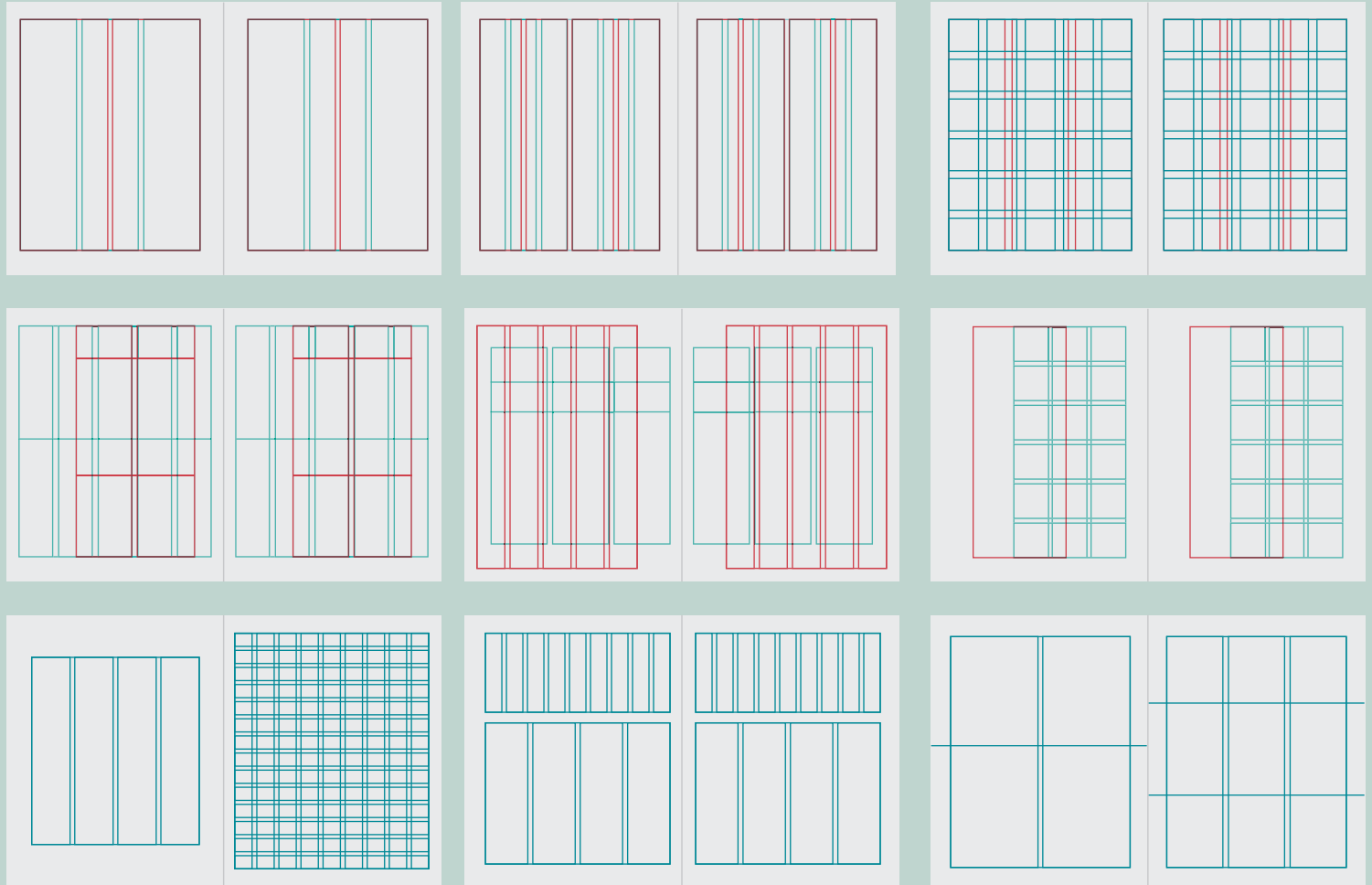
Level Design Group / USA



brochure covers) is flipped in the opposite direction when applied to the design of the letterhead, below.

Sagmeister+Walsh / USA





Sometimes—to address content issues or to achieve a desired look—a designer might use multiple grids in the same project, either between sections or even within a single page spread. Each grid can be assigned a particular kind of content to organize, or material can be articulated across divisions within the multiple grids. Working with several grids together can take several directions.

— The first option is simply to use two or more different grids that share outer margins, adjusting their internal alignments and widths or depths to correspond somewhat, or allowing them to be arbitrary. A second

possibility is to overlay grids whose margins are each independent of the others; perhaps some of their internal alignments correspond—or not. A third option is to combine grids on a single page but to separate them for specific purposes. For example, primary text or images might occupy a three-column grid in the upper two-thirds of the page, but a five-column grid might hold captions or other secondary content in the lower third of the page.

Each row of these grid diagrams shows one of the compound grid varieties described here:

Top

**Two grids sharing outer margins**

Middle

**Two grids with different margins**

Bottom

**Two grids separated spatially across the format**



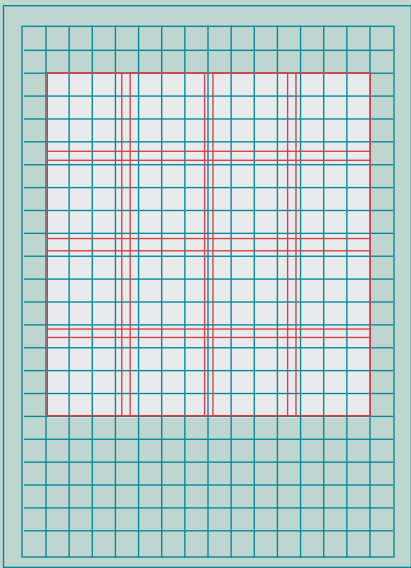
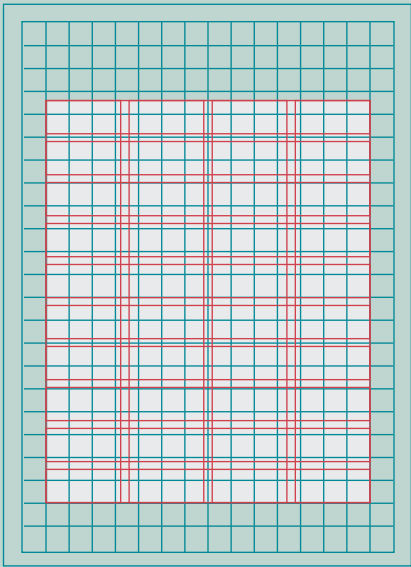
In an unusual deviation from regular modular grids, where the same module governs every page regardless of the information being presented, this

small-format annual report uses three separate articulations of a modular grid, each with its own module proportion. The differences in margin measure between each grid correspond to the dimensions of the

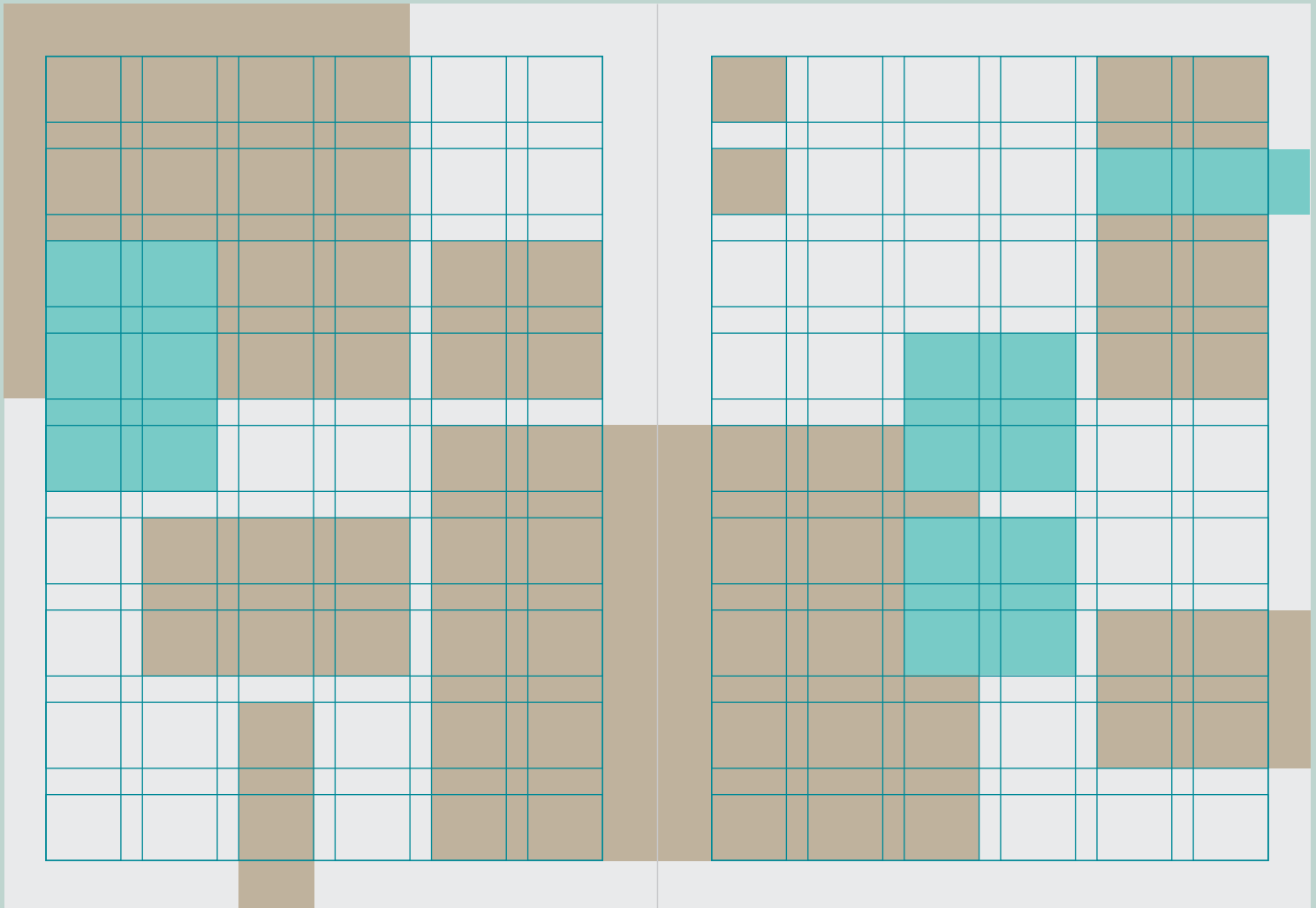
smallest-module grid, which is shown explicitly as a graphical element overlaying the portrait on the right-hand page of the spread at bottom. Different combina-

tions of the three grids, corresponding to the page spreads, are shown.

Ideas On Purpose / USA

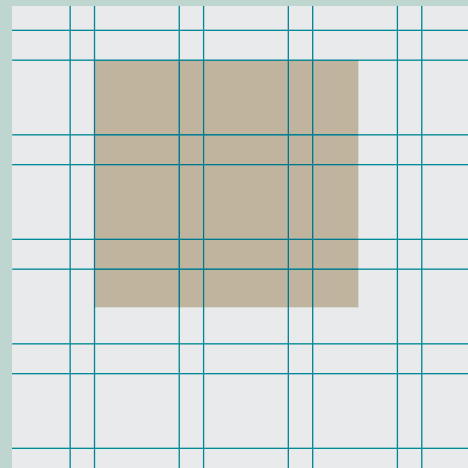


## Options



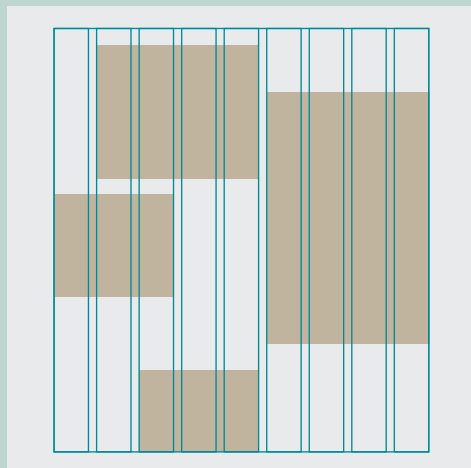
The geometric simplicity of rectilinear images (or graphical planes) offers the easiest way to first understand how a grid manages visual material within its structure.

\_\_\_ All the instances shown above are possible—and more. The basic rule to follow is this: The edges of images align with the edges of columns, left-to-right, and they align with the edges of rows, top-to-bottom. It's OK for images to overlap each other, and to bleed off the page (even across the page gutter)—so long as they adhere to the column and row alignments whenever they fall within the body of the structure.

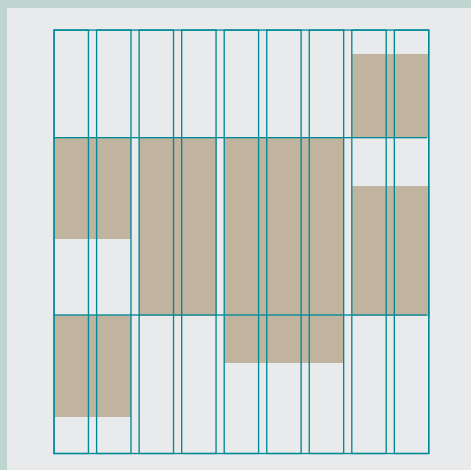


**A common error is to allow an image's edges to fall somewhere in the middle of a column or row. Sometimes it looks better that way. Fine, then—add more columns or rows so that proportional alignment option becomes available as part of the structure.**

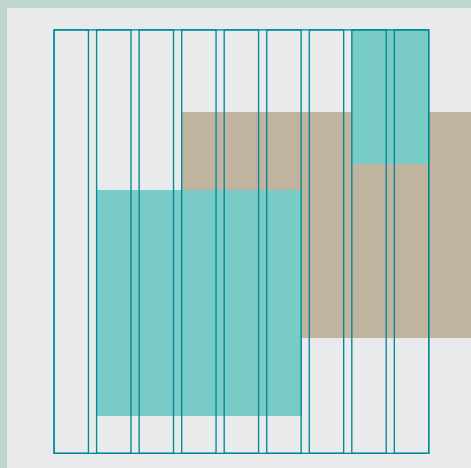
## Alignment Logic



In a column grid without flowlines to constrain them, images may be of any depth and slide up and down the columns without aligning horizontally at any point.

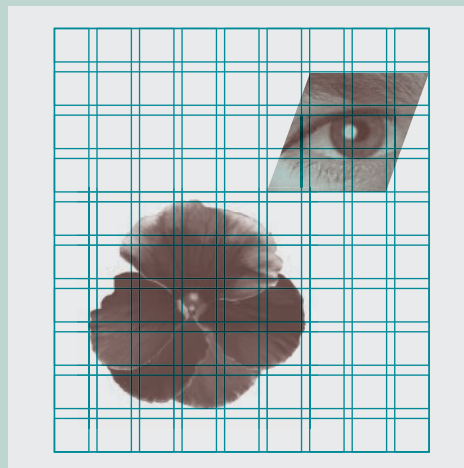


As soon as flowlines are introduced, one must assume there's a need to create horizontal alignments—in which case, images can hang from them, dropping to whatever depth; sit on them; or be proportioned by the distance between them (if there are more than one).

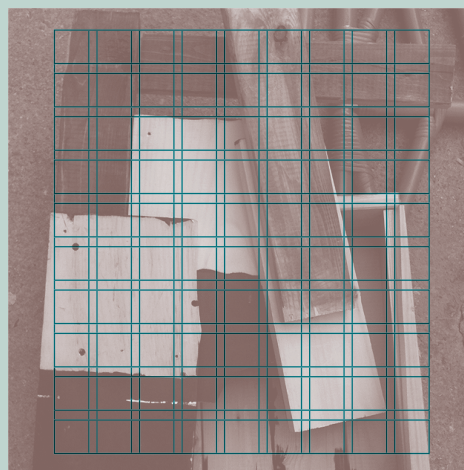


Always keep in mind that images can cross from one column (or row) to another—and that means they can overlap each other at different sizes, in different proportions, and so on.

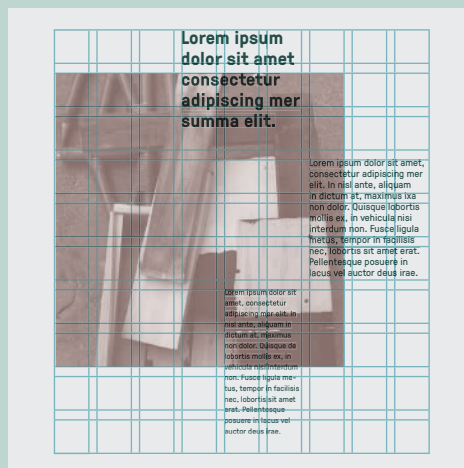
## Silhouettes and Full Bleeds



Silhouetted images and those cropped into irregular shapes are perfectly fine, but the designer must ensure that they “feel” as though they’re aligned with guides or that they’re proportionally related to grid widths and depths—which means “eyeballing” them until they look right.



Images that fill an entire page or spread from edge to edge can be made to relate to the underlying grid through careful sizing and cropping—so that key visual features align with a column or row guide, or refer to widths or depths evident in adjacent elements.



Text, of course, can be set on top of an image (so long as there's enough contrast between their relative values for the text to be legible). In such cases, the text's visual qualities must play off those of the image while it's still following the structure underneath.

Options



Similar to the way images should correspond to a grid’s alignment guides, so too should text—regardless whether it is a headline, a deck, running text, a callout, or caption. Text set flush-left should have its aligned edge positioned along the left edge of a column; the right-hand edge of its bounding box should butt up against the right-hand edge of a column. Column gutters and row gutters exist to keep text separate when being articulated side by side (unless, of course, the text is purposely being made to cross from a column originating within a negative space over a column into an area occupied by an

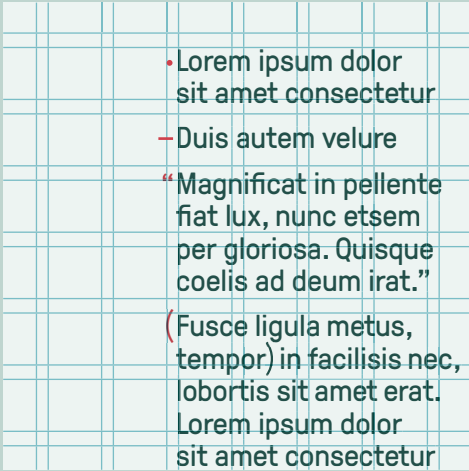
image). A single paragraph or column of text always begins from the top edge guideline of a row—or “hangs” from it—but it may similarly cross through a lower row, or even end in the middle of a row. Text is organic: When it runs out, it runs out.  
\_\_\_\_ Despite how limiting those rules sound, the possibilities for how type may be shaped on a grid—wide or narrow, rising and falling—are endless. Because a well-considered grid with an adequate number of columns provides so many possible permutations in an arrangement, a designer has precise control over how he or she proportions and positions

each kind of information. Running text can be easily differentiated from captions, or from callouts, simply by virtue of assigning each a particular column-based width. The grid’s organizing logic not only promotes visual flexibility and contrast, but clarity of informational hierarchy as a result.

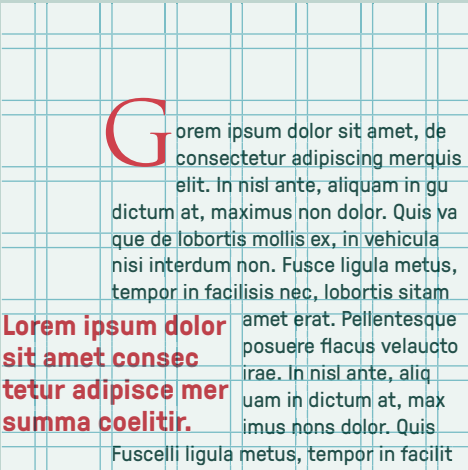
# Special Cases and Logic Oddities



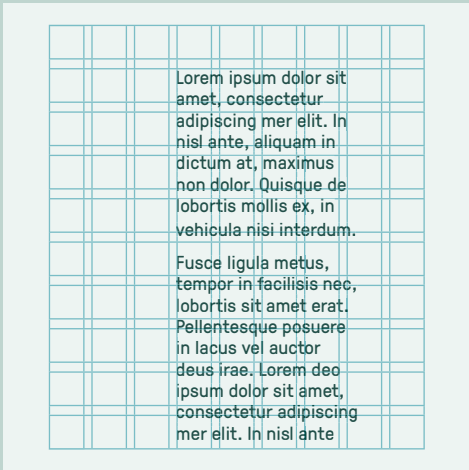
Ragged text creates a soft, irregular edge that won't quite fill out columns. The irregularity of the rag's shape becomes more pronounced at larger text sizes—for instance, in a headline or title. It's OK: a well-placed element will help optically “mark” or “complete” the right edge of the column.



Bullets are best set to “hang” to the left of a column alignment, as are quotation marks when they occur at the beginning of a line of text. Not doing so disrupts the clarity of the aligned edge—in short, it looks sloppy.



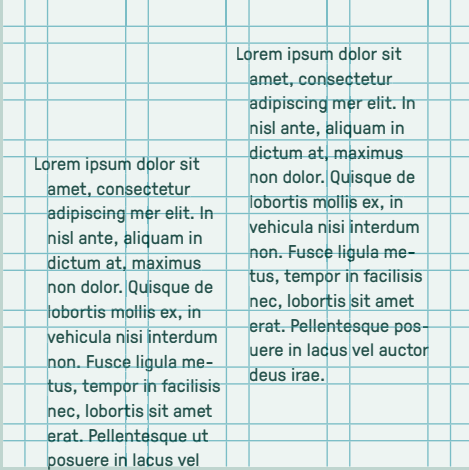
Textual inclusions—such as initial caps and callouts that invade the regular text structure—should correspond to grid increments... or very clearly *not* conform to them.



If a column of text is crossing over several rows, and there are paragraph breaks within it, they need not fall at a row guideline. Causing them to do so is a possibility, but it results in awkward separations within the column and an overly self-conscious quality to the layout's typography.



Setting text centered-axis often results in the text appearing unrelated to column alignments. The closer the overall width of such a text element to a recognizable column width, the better; aligning its central axis to a clearly demarcated column edge guide can only help it appear well integrated.



Hanging indents (sometimes referred to as “outdents”) are a distinctive typographic gesture that require wider column gutters, or careful positioning in a column far away from the one that precedes it.



The stark two-column vertical emphasis in this brochure is visually countered by two flowlines that define positions for two kinds of captions relating to the images above them.




Flowlines help readers distinguish the beginning of an article—where text hangs from the page's vertical center—from the continuation of an article, in which text fills the columns to the margins. The lower flowline also partitions the page to allow for dramatic pullquotes and to align text and a sidebar.

[illegible]

"If you live in Africa, you know African society is different from Western society: families are different, politics is different, the way people relate to each other is different. But all of those things are irrelevant to economists." James Robinson

[illegible]

As mentioned previously, it's not necessary to introduce flowlines into a column grid—but they certainly help contribute horizontal movement and structure that contrasts the up-and-down movement of the columns.

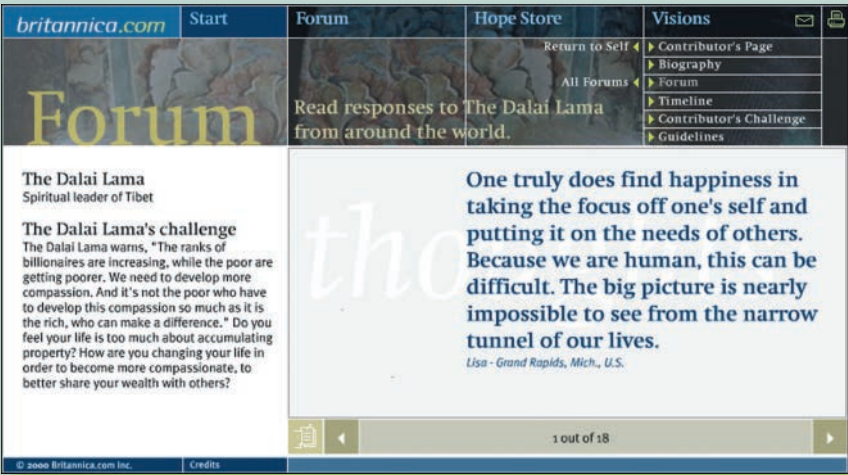
\_\_\_\_ Beyond the visual respite against verticality, flowlines also create opportunities to educate the viewer as to how the information within the visual field works: Flowlines may help a viewer identify where to begin reading; they might anchor the titles or callouts to particular depths on the page, to help identify them as such, or to create a strong hierarchical pause begin title and text; they may delineate

relationships between seemingly unrelated elements, such as an image and text that refers to it; and they may also define simple spatial zones without resorting to using a modular grid, which may be overly complicated for a relatively simple informational hierarchy or more continuous text.

\_\_\_ Furthermore, flowlines help build consistency in compositional movement and rhythm from page to page (whether printed or screen-based), and from spread to spread among page sequences. In using them, a designer has the potential to enhance a sense of continuity among very disparate

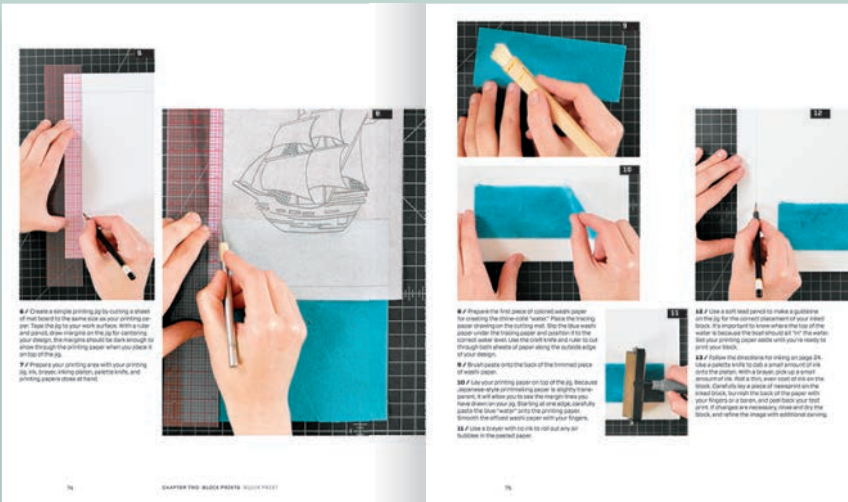
parts of a publication, or the opposite: Different flowlines used in each part or section will signal those sections' differences and aid readers in identifying them, or distinguishing them from each other at a glance.

# Spatial Zones



Most websites, like this one, define spatial zones that act as templates for areas of different functionality—navigation versus content, for example. Here, three horizontal bands serve that purpose; vertical sub-zones in the lower two bands create greater specificity of function.

Meta Design SF / USA



The layout of this book that teaches printmaking processes divides the spread into two zones with a single flowline across a multicolumn grid: text describing steps to follow below, images above. Images are permitted to occasionally cross that boundary for the sake of variety.

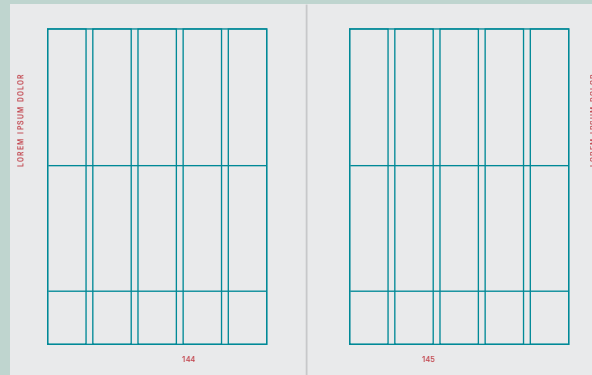
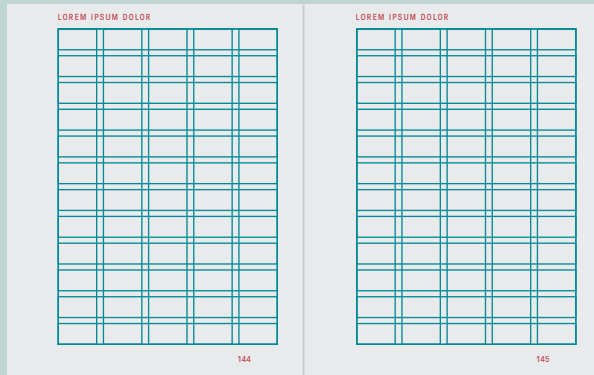
Timothy Samara / USA

Spatial zones are areas within a page or spread that are designated for specific functions, or assigned particular kinds of content, as a means of both invigorating layouts and helping readers navigate. In a pure column grid, horizontal zones can be defined with a flowline or two; a particular column or a group of columns can establish vertical zones. In a modular grid, groups of rows or columns accomplish the same goals. Alternatively, a designer might add an extra flowline or vertical guideline independent of the grid's basic structure—purposely interrupting its regularity to more dramatically emphasize the zone's

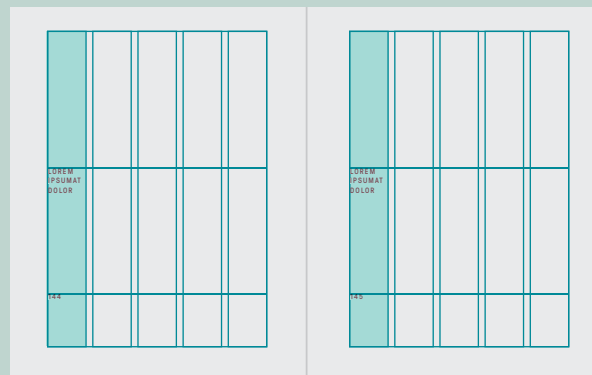
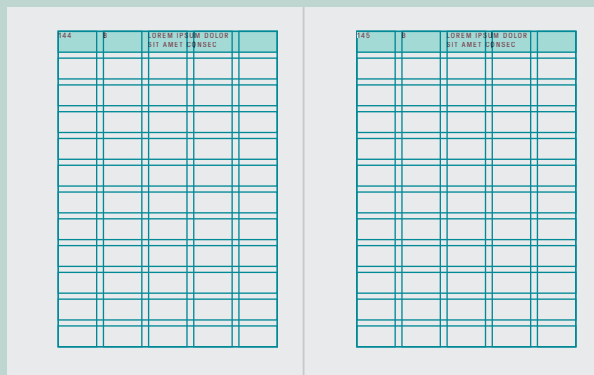
presence. Further, modules may be grouped in mosaic-like patterns to create stepped or irregularly-shaped zones.

\_\_\_ In essence, spatial zones add some of the qualities of a hierarchic grid into grids defined by regular intervals. Spatial zones are especially useful for separating continuous text from recurring sidebars or info-graphics, or for helping correlate the text of a step-based process with images that illustrate the steps that it describes.

## Notational Elements



**Folios and runners can exist in the margins, outside the body, column structure, or modules—as shown in these examples. If they do, they should align to a column edge or row edge, or to a flowline.**



**Folios and runners also may be integrated directly into the body, in effect by designating a row or column within the structure as a “zone” for such elements. This approach can also be applied to the positioning of headings in consistent locations, e.g., always hanging from the second row from the top.**

Many designers neglect such elements as folios and runners, but they’re critically important to consider because they typically occupy the same location on every page or every spread. In a website, the navigation is the corresponding informational component on the page (folios and runners are, it’s worth noting, the print version of navigation).

\_\_\_ The consistency of these elements’ presence means they can easily become distracting, so they require adequate spatial separation from text or other content. Their chosen locations will often frustrate designers by preventing them from placing

images or other content where they feel it’s best, because the folio or runner is there. Their positions, sizes, and styles dramatically influence the proportions of margins in which they’re placed (usually forcing the margin measure to increase so as to keep text from getting uncomfortably close).

\_\_\_ And, they’re visual forms: Folios become dots, visually, and runners become lines—extending a certain length, being light or dark in weight, moving horizontally or vertically. To integrate seamlessly, yet dynamically, into layouts, notational elements must be positioned, first and foremost, with respect

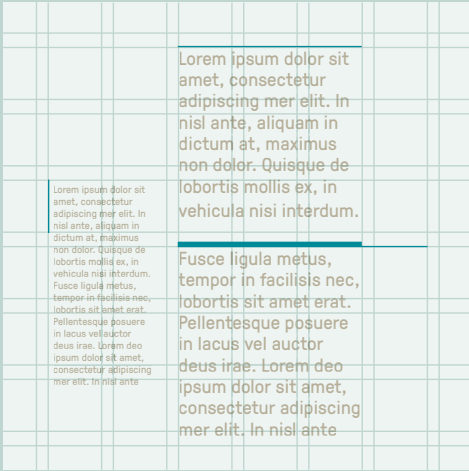
to the grid’s divisions. Equally important is that they feel like they’re in dialogue with the remainder of the layout’s compositional qualities and stylistically related to the typography. Many designers follow the convention of setting folios in the lower corners of the spread, but there are many ways to position notational elements such that they’re easy to find and interesting to look at. There are, despite what any jaded art director or editor tells you, no actual rules for how to do so.



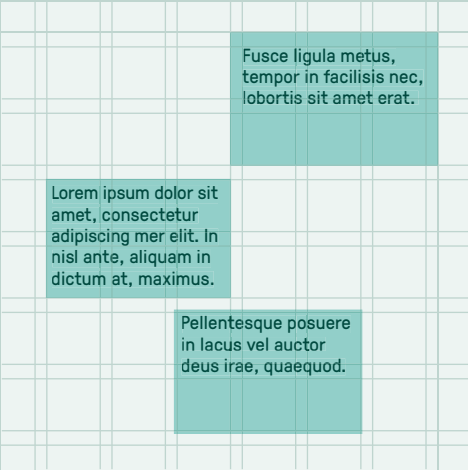
# Boxes, Lines, and Dots



Dots are excellent devices for marking intersections of vertical and horizontal axes. A single dot can anchor a piece of text from across a page to another element or simply activate a negative space that seems awkwardly empty, without killing its visual openness.



Lines emphasize the axes themselves, whether those of columns or row edges. Always set lines to correspond to the grid's alignments, rather than to a given text element's length.



Colored boxes and linear frames that surround text must be given adequate space. One strategy is to extend them to the gutters; another is to slightly inset the text; yet a third is to do a little of both. Regardless of the chosen option, text inside and outside a box should align consistently throughout.



Lines are also useful for filling out, or more clearly defining, the width of a column that is occupied by a text with extremely inconsistent line lengths—things like lists of names, or combinations of list-like elements, notations, and running text.

Graphical elements lend finesse, contrast with larger-scale elements, articulate structure, separate clusters of material, and visually delight the eye. They extend the details of typographic form—often buried within the bigger picture of their shapes and textures—outward into the pictorial space to create added dialogue between type and other kinds of material. Given that images and text behave in certain ways relative to column and row alignments, details like boxes, lines, and dots should too.

Every design problem is different and requires a specific grid to address it well. The first step in constructing a reliable grid is to assess the informational characteristics and the production requirements of the project's content. This phase is extremely important; the grid is a closed system once it is developed, and in building it the designer must account for the content's idiosyncrasies, such as the nature of the images, or how many kinds of text involved, and the relative volumes of each.

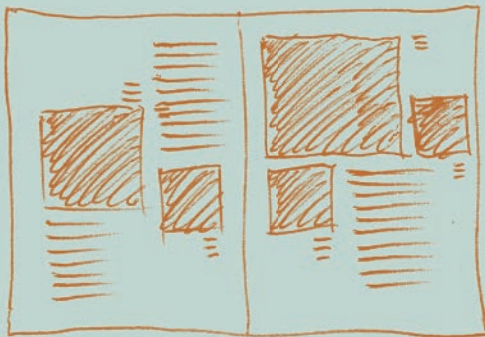
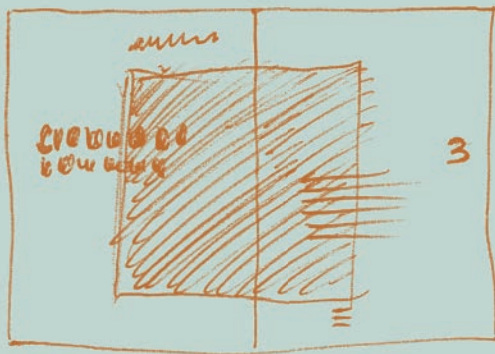
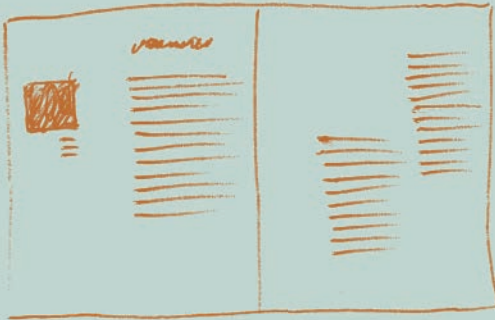
Additionally, the designer must anticipate potential problems that might occur while laying out the content within the grid, such as unusually long headlines, prohibitions against cropping images, dead spots left if the content in one section runs out—or even something as simple as achieving a required page count.

— Once the designer thoroughly understands the content, there are a number of strategies he or she may pursue toward realizing a workable grid and, most often, it will mean combining two or more approaches at the same time.

**Is it possible to simply pick a grid arbitrarily and see what happens? Absolutely! What often results is frustration upon discovering a bevy of content issues that require reworking the structure, readjusting everything that's already been designed, discovering new problems—and a lot of time lost.**

**Rather than contemplate that kind of trial by fire, better to just design a few, well-chosen key parts, and develop the grid from seeing the real material in action. This kind of spontaneous approach sidesteps all the strategy and, while it will take just as long (or longer), the results will likely be well-tailored to meeting the project's goals.**

**Working by hand (yes!) frees one from the mechanical qualities of working with mouse and software, and working small prevents getting overly invested in details. The sketches are very raw, but an overall visual concept is clear enough to proceed to the next step.**

[illegible][illegible]

**You'll discover some corresponding alignments and proportions between elements from different layouts. Most likely, there will also be elements that don't match up. Working from those that do and adjusting those that don't—splitting the difference between**

some that are close—construct a column grid and add any flowlines that the composite suggests, or convert it to a modular grid for more precise, detailed control and flexibility.

Nothing, though, can truly replace up-front planning...

Physicalities of Format and Content

In today's digital world, it's easy to forget that the physical world inevitably intrudes on the design process. This fact applies equally to digital, print, and environmental design. A screen is a particular size, and will display only a certain amount of information at a time. Then, there's pixel resolution, necessitating larger text sizes to ensure crisp legibility. Disconcerting, too, is the prospect of users altering their view settings and affecting spatial attributes.

\_\_\_ In print and fabrication, format size is a strong determining factor for choosing layout approaches. There's only so much material

one can fit on a sheet of paper or on a box; clearly, the size, proportion, and shape of the medium will influence the direction a grid takes. It might be that a given container requires large margin measures; similarly, predetermined page counts for publications will often determine content distribution.

\_\_\_ The other side of the physical coin is the way that content can vary tremendously from part to part within a single project. One part may involve two images and 500 words of text, while another is 10,000 words of Q and A dialogue with callouts, but no images. 10,000 words is a lot of text; set in a serif

at 8 points, it will exceed the equivalent of 50 A4 letter-sized pages. One might assume that a tiny-module, 100-column grid would be the solution to accommodating all the variables. But then, the modules would be so small as to be insignificant. It is incumbent upon the designer to take these factors into serious consideration up front; the more thoroughly they are understood, the better. Limitations unaddressed can be disastrous... But, they may also happen to lead the designer into new creative territory.

Project Content Survey	VERBAL	VISUAL																	
			A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M				
Heading/Title	1																		
Sub-title	2																		
Extensive Deck	3																		
Callout/Pullquote	4																		
Prose: 15–30 w	5																		
Prose: 30–50 w	6																		
Prose: 50–100 w	7																		
Prose: 100–300 w	8																		
Prose: 300–1000 w	9																		
Prose: 1K–2K w	10																		
Poetics: Short	11																		
Poetics: Long	12																		
Testimonial	13																		
Commentary	14																		
Image Captions	15																		
Sidebar	16																		
Timeline	17																		
Financial Table	18																		
Margin Notes	19																		
Footnotes	20																		
Procedure: Short	21																		
Procedure: Extensive	22																		
Content Listing	23																		
Content Submenu	24																		
Categorical List	25																		
Combination: Note by Number																			
Combination: Note by Number																			

When weighing format size, shape, and other such physical factors against the requirements imposed by content, look for best- and worst-case scenarios (by page, spread, or section) by which to judge: compare the smallest amount of something to the largest, or the most simple combination of content elements to the most complex.

\_\_\_ Creating a matrix (like the one shown here) to map extensive content can be an especially helpful reference—for planning page count, website wireframes, and even for project proposal budgeting purposes.

## Functional Distinctions and Complexity



As described in the “trial-by-fire” scenario on the previous spread, understanding the nature of the content is paramount. Not all information (meaning images, as well as text or data) is the same—different kinds require different treatments to best display them or communicate their ideas clearly. \_\_\_\_ It’s really a question of usability: Clarity in understanding content intellectually, emotionally, symbolically, contextually, and in terms of usability all must inform how the content is arranged and sequenced. A grid’s attributes affect these levels of understanding visually and informationally: Marked

locations, adequate widths for meaningful display, specific spatial intervals that draw information closer or push it apart in space—a grid’s proportions and alignments must be able to present each informational configuration in the way that is intrinsically best for it, encompassing the diversity of means in one comprehensive structure. \_\_\_\_ The relationship is reciprocal. Arbitrarily choosing a grid to fit content will almost certainly do the information a disservice; and, the information, ill-fitted, deprives the designer of achieving the fullest expression.



Recognizing that every level of information to be presented in a project may require specific structural attributes—because of its depth, complexity, or particular mode of functionality—is the first step in creating a comprehensive grid that will enfold all of those attributes.

Diagrammed at left are major functional components associated with print (top) and UX design (bottom), with each coded to its relative level of complexity by depth of color.

The reciprocal relationship between content structure and communicative usability is evinced by the annual report pages above. The designers built a grid with spatial zones to accommodate material that ranged from in-depth business data to personal testimonies; their juxtaposition on opposing surfaces of a flap allows the reader to experience the client’s competence and humanity as interrelated: one begets the other and vice-versa.

InCorporate GmbH / Germany



Designing to Read

Layout approaches vary in how they emphasize images or text, but in projects boasting a significant amount of text, arguably the type is the most important component. The more text is present, the more challenging it is to assimilate. It requires more work on the part of the viewer. Basing a grid's attributes on those of the text's typography ought to be considered one of the first practical strategies to pursue when building a grid.

\_\_\_ Comfortable, or optimal, text typography incorporates assessments of type size, a font's "color" or density, the spacing between letters, words, and lines, and the effect of

how many characters are sequenced in a single line before the line ends. Minute shifts in these qualities of the text's attributes promote readability or hinder it dramatically.

\_\_\_ For a majority of readers, reading text set in Times Roman at a size of 9 points poses no problem. A blanket rule for a legible point size is impossible; it depends on the height of a given font's lowercase letters. As a starting point, a designer might compare the typeface he or she wants to use to a specimen of Times Roman, set at 9 points, and adjust the desired font's point size until the heights of the two fonts' lowercase

letters match, even if the point size isn't a round number. The particular stylistic form of a font may require adjusting its size up or down. For example, condensed typefaces have smaller counters, and so benefit from being enlarged slightly (as well as spaced a bit more loosely).

\_\_\_ Regardless of the type size or a reader's maturity, between fifty and eighty characters (including spaces) can be processed before a line return. With words averaging between five and ten letters, that means approximately eight to twelve words per line. This character count determines the width of a



This comparison of enlarged specimens of Times Roman, on the left, and Gotham, on the right, demonstrates how the differences between the heights of the lowercase between fonts (the x-height) can cause two fonts set at the same size to appear to be very different in size. Rather than make sizing decisions based on numeric measure, do so optically.

- Hh Hh *Helvetica*
- Hh Hh *Auto 1*
- Hh Hh *Archer*
- Hh Hh *Akzidenz Grotesk*
- Hh Hh *Bodoni*
- Hh Hh *Century Schoolbook*
- Hh Hh *Avenir 55*
- Hh Hh *Scala*
- Hh Hh *Gill Sans*
- Hh Hh *Univers 55*

For reference, shown here are comparisons of Times Roman (left-hand column) set at a size of 9 points, with a selection of various other fonts, also set 9 points in size.

or sit amet  
cing elit in  
na es nunc  
loriosa de  
quod vam  
um dolore  
ur adipscit

Lorem ipsum  
consectetur  
nonum et  
et semper

A serif specimen with a small x-height, set solid (the leading measure equal to the point size)

or sit amet  
cing elit in  
na es nunc  
loriosa de  
quod vam  
um dolore  
ur adipscit

Lorem ipsum  
consectetur  
nonum et  
et semper

As above, but with an extra point of leading to prevent descenders and ascenders from touching

or sit ame  
cing elitin  
ma es nun  
gloriosa e  
lure quod  
em ipsum  
nsectitura

Lorem ipsum  
consectetur  
nonum et  
cet semper

A sans serif specimen of the same point size, but a much larger x-height and shorter ascenders and descenders, again set solid

paragraph—for that typeface, set in its particular size. Because the optimal character count results in an average number of words of average length on each line\*, the presence of hyphens is greatly reduced. In ragged text, this same consistency tends to result in a rag shape that is rhythmically regular; for justified text, the spacing within lines tends to be regular as well, minimizing dark/light spot-tiness and the appearance of rivers crossing through the paragraph.

— The leading of the lines depends on the width of the paragraph and the type size. The interline space\*\* should be larger than

the apparent height of the lines, but not so large that it becomes pronounced. Similarly, the leading must not be so tight that the reader locates the beginning of the same line after the return and begins reading it again. As paragraph width increases, so must the leading—to keep line-beginnings distinct.

\* This will be true only for English; every language has its own specific optimal character count.

\*\* *Leading* is an unimportant measurement. *Interline space*, the shape of negative, or “white,” space between lines of text—this is what actually matters in typesetting.

Think of the blank page as alpine meadow, or as the purity of undifferentiated being. The typographer enters this space and must change it. The reader will enter it later, to see what the typographer has done. The underlying truth of the blank page must be infringed, but it must never altogether disappear—and whatever displaces it might well aim to be as lively and peaceful as it is. It is not enough, when building a title page, merely to unload some big, prefabricated letters into the center of the space, nor to dig a few holes in the silence with typographic heavy machinery and move on. Big type, even huge type, can be beautiful and useful.

**An optimal paragraph setting presents between 50 and 80 characters per line (approximately 65 is usually ideal); is a comfortable size to read continuously; has a uniformly soft rag shape; and is disrupted by only one hyphen.**

Text excerpted from  
*The Elements of Typographic Style*  
Robert Bringhurst

An ancient metaphor: thought is a thread, and the raconteur is a spinner of yarns—but the true storyteller, the poet, is a weaver. The scribes made this old and audible abstraction into a new and visible fact. After long practice, their work took on such an even flexible texture that they called the written page a *textus*, which means cloth. The typesetting device, whether it happens to be a computer or a composing stick, functions like a loom. And the typographer, like the scribe, normally aims to weave the text as evenly as possible. Good letterforms are designed to give a lively, even texture, but careless spacing of letters, lines, and words can tear this fabric apart.

Another ancient metaphor: the density of texture in a written or typeset page is called its color. This has nothing to do with red or green ink; it refers only to the darkness or blackness of the letterforms in mass. Once the demands of legibility and logical order are satisfied, evenness of color is the typographer's normal aim.

#### Well-Justified

The specimens above compare optimal and well-spaced, comfortable justified setting with its jarring, poorly-set counterpart.

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#### Poorly Justified



## Determining Column Structure

After first defining stylistic attributes for each kind of text (as outlined on the previous page spread), use them to develop the grid's base proportions—beginning with a determination for the column width.

\_\_\_ The first stage of this process is to find a universal width increment that all of the optimally styled text specimens can share. The fastest way to do so is to compare only the widths of the narrowest and widest specimens—usually, the caption and the headline. However, the most important text style is the running text, the one which will appear in the greatest volume, and whose read-

ability is most critical, because the reading of extensive, continuous text is the most difficult. It is advisable, therefore, to compare narrowest, widest, and running text specimen widths to assess column width relationships—but, one might as well compare all of the specimens together for best results.

\_\_\_ Following the process for finding a universal column width described below will yield a set of increments that doesn't account for column separation: the gutters. The next stage is to determine what the column gutter should be. Again, because running text will be the most ubiquitous, and most import-

ant, text style to appear—due to the need to ensure the reader's eye moves downward through the text without jumping horizontally into an adjacent column—it makes the most sense to base the column gutter measure on the requirements of the running text.

\_\_\_ Once column- and column gutter-widths are known, the last step is to determine how many columns, including the gutters between them, will fit within the project's page format. The spaces that remain on either side of that column group will form the outer and inner margin measures.



**Align specimens of the type styles to the left, in a vertical stack. Draw vertical guide-lines as shown to mark their left-aligned edges, as well as each specimen's longest line.**

**Slightly adjust the positions of the long-line guides to discover a fractional relationship between the styles' respective widths—where the caption width, for instance, might be one half, or one third, that of the running text.**

**Combine fractional widths and/or split the differences to yield a single width increment that governs all the widths as a multiple of itself: two for the caption, four for running text, and so on. Some variance between the original text widths and new "proto-column" width will be evident; remember that "optimal" has a character-count tolerance built in.**

**This universal increment will be the column width.**

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**Based on the universal column width, set two deep columns of running text side by side.**

**Separate them as desired, then measure the space between their bounding boxes. Returning to the guidelines over the specimen stack:**

**Duplicate the second guideline from the left-most one in position; then shift it rightward until the space**

**between the duplicate and the original matches the measurement you noted previously.**

**Move the remaining guidelines, as a group, rightward to begin at this new starting point, then repeat the process so that you maintain consistent column widths while adding the gutter spaces between them.**

# Developing Row Structure

If the project’s grid requires only columns (and, optionally, a flowline or two), developing a row structure is unnecessary; having positioned a grouping of columns on the page as described opposite to reveal the outer and inner margins, all that remains is to define the margins at the top and bottom of the page. If the project requires a modular grid, then the next step is to establish a measure for the row and the gutters between them.

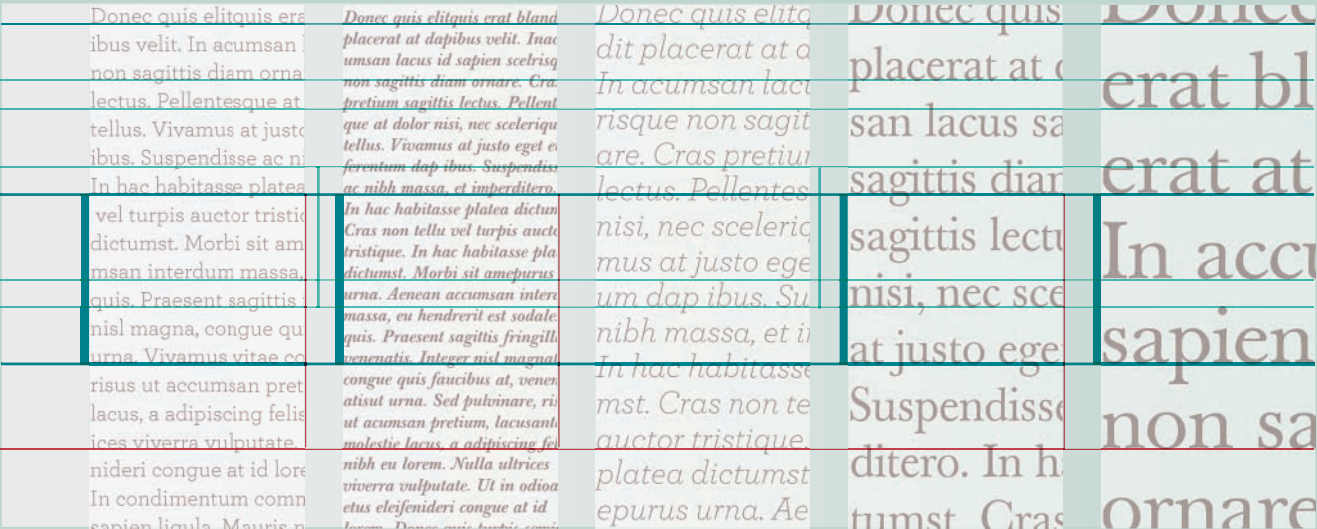
— This process is similar to that of defining column width, but here the goal is to define depth intervals from page top to bottom. One preliminary decision to be made is whether

the baselines of text positioned in adjacent columns should align horizontally with each other (as they do in this book). Historically, such baseline alignment has been considered desirable, but this is a subjective preference. Given that each text style’s leading is likely to be different, achieving baseline alignment among them all will be tricky; further, if paragraphs are separated by a different leading measure than that within contiguous text (a proportional return, rather than an intrinsic return)—and, if there is space added before or after a hard return—baseline alignment becomes more challenging still.

Should baseline alignment seem unimportant, the designer can define a depth interval for rows and row gutters, decide how many rows are useful, and choose measures for the head and foot margins as they see fit.

— If, on the other hand, baseline alignment is desirable, the row structure must be defined based on some commonality to be found between the various styles’ leading increments... The more involved process that is described below.

\* Adjusting the leading measures means that the optimal interline spacing previously determined for each style may change; a little extra is usually OK, but *decreasing* interline space may be problematic for some styles.



**Position specimens of the text styles adjacent to each other, with the first lines of each resting on the same baseline.**

— The leading measures of the various styles must be made to share a numeric relationship: Increase and/or decrease the individ-

ual leading measures of each text style until all of the measures are divisible by the same number.\* Among the set of specimens above, all the leading measures are multiples of 6, a relatively large number. By way of comparison, the

leading measures of the text styles used in this book are multiples of 2.1, which is small.

— In comparing specimens, one will notice that the text of some or all of the styles share both the top baseline and another at particular intervals.

One of these intervals is likely to be a good choice for the row depth—probably the one at which the majority of the baselines meet up. It’s alright if not every style’s baselines meet at this interval; the odd ones out will still show baseline alignment with the others in

various instances, just not as consistently.

— A measure for the row gutter is typically based on the running text’s leading, but it may just as easily be some other increment that is a multiple of the common leading number.

The last step is to fit a useful number of rows from top to bottom of the page; the remaining spaces above and below the row set become the head margin and foot margin.

## Based on Typesetting Attributes

Yet another important consideration with regard to the quality of the typography is the interrelationship of spacing proportions within text elements, relative to the spaces that separate text elements and, further, to those that separate the body from the edges of the format—the margins. When books were designed by printers, as well as produced by them, a simple spatial ratio between the width of the column gutters and the width of the margins came to be established: as a rule of thumb, the margin's width would be twice that of the gutters between columns. The intent of this 2:1 ratio was to ensure that

the group of columns would hold together as a distinct visual unit within the margins, despite the spaces separating them.

\_\_\_ This logic speaks to the fundamental notion of space in the context of typographic information: material that is contiguous, or more closely related in meaning, should be closer together; and information that is not contiguous, or unrelated in meaning, should be further apart. The printer's spacing logic might very well then be applied to all the different kinds of spaces that appear within, or between, typographic components, the better to distinguish between them.

Therefore, in addition to independently determining the optimal interline spaces in text, the separation of paragraphs, the gutters between columns and rows, and the margins, make sure they also increase in proportion incrementally—from the tightest (between letters) to the largest (the margins), adjusting all as needed.

This diagram shows spacing relationships among typesetting components to be achieved, ordered from smallest [tightest]—the space between the letters within words—to the largest [loosest]—the measure of the narrowest margin. The measurements have been enlarged for demonstration, but are shown in relative proportion to each other.

**As you develop optimal typesetting attributes for each kind of text, be sure to compare the spacing that results; adjust their respective spacing as needed to maintain the scale relationships.**

# Correlating the Row Structure with a Baseline Grid

If the designer has decided that the baselines of text in adjacent columns are going to align, he or she will then want to specify a baseline grid for the document so that the text styles can be locked to it, ensuring there's never any misalignment. For a grid of columns, without rows, the designer may simply define the baseline grid increment—the common leading number upon which all the text styles' leading measures are based—and the point at which the baseline grid starts at the top of the page. The first guideline in the baseline grid typically falls just under the head margin, so that an instance of the smallest text style (like the caption) can be set to hang from the head margin and have its first line sit on the first baseline grid guide.

— On the other hand, for a grid with rows, specifying the parameters of the baseline grid is a little more complicated: The guides in the baseline grid must land precisely where the row guides, row-gutter guides, and foot-margin guides are located. The reason is that both text and images must be able to be separated from each other by the row gutter, but text must still be able to flow downward in a column, through the row gutter, and remain locked to the baseline grid—with its bottom-most line coming to rest on the foot margin. To accomplish this, the designer will have to do some math.

To demonstrate the method for integrating the baseline grid with the row structure, the common leading number of 6 points (from the examples on the previous spread) is used, along with a hypothetical row depth of 48 points and a row gutter depth of 12 points:

1 **Leading is measured in point increments, so all depth measures will need to do so as well; in the page layout program's Preferences, convert all of the document's measurements to the point scale.**

2 **Determine the height of the page, measured in points. The hypothetical page shown here is 570 points in height.**

3 **Add up the total depth of all the rows that will fit comfortably within the page height, including gutters between them. In this example, that's 8 rows, totaling 468 points deep.**

4 **Subtract the row structure depth from the height of the page; the remainder is what is left for the head margin and foot margin:**

—  
570 points minus 468 points = 102 points

5 **Split the remainder to determine the measures of the head margin and foot margin. If these margin measures seem too tight, remove a row (or reportion the row depth based on a different leading depth interval, following the steps on the previous page spread).**

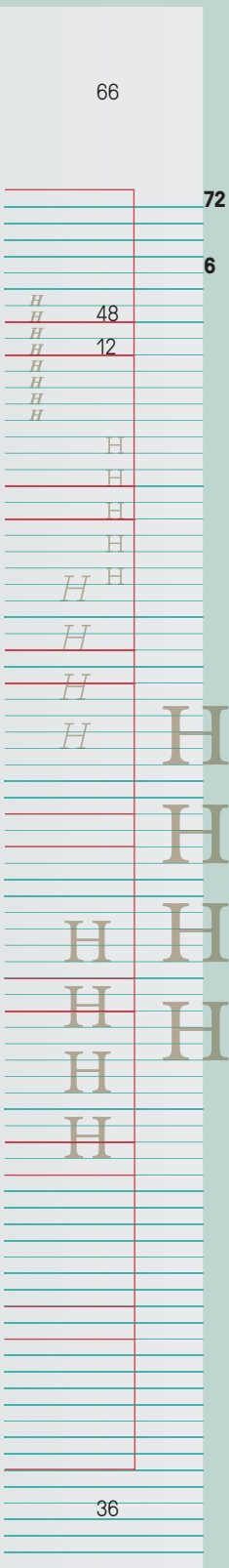
—  
In this example, the remaining 102 points is split so that the head margin is 66 points deep and the foot margin is 36 points deep.

6 **Set the margins in the document. The lateral margins (to the left and right of the column structure) were determined previously.**

7 **Create the document grid guides, specifying the number of columns, the measure of the column gutters, the number of rows, and the measure of the row gutters—again, in points. Make sure that these are set to the margins, not to the page. Check to see that the top-most row guide and the bottom-most row guide strike the head and foot margins, respectively. If they don't, or if the depth of the rows or gutters is somehow off, check the math and recalculate as needed.**

8 **In the software's preferences, specify the baseline grid increment (for this example, that's one grid line every 6 points) and set the location, in points, at which the grid will begin from the top of the page. Check to see that the baseline grid lines land exactly on all the row guides, row-gutter guides, and the foot margin. If they don't, start the baseline grid at a different location and test it again.**

—  
The baseline grid in the example begins at a depth of 72 points from the top of the page. This starting point permits a caption to hang from the head margin and lock to the first grid line—because the caption leading is 6 points.



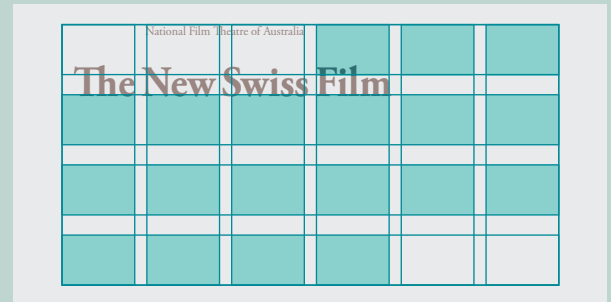


## Universal Proportion



The grid for this poster is based on the proportional aspect ratio of a film still: The module is the size and shape of one frame. You'll notice that the row gutters are deeper in measure than the column gutters are wide: The designer decided that, in order to maintain the cinematic, storyboard-like flow of the images, captions for them would need to appear below, rather than to the side of each.

Josef Müller-Brockmann  
Reproduced from  
*Grid Systems in Graphic Design* / Niggli Verlag,  
Switzerland, 1962.  
Courtesy of Niggli Verlag



To demonstrate how flexible a grid built this way can be, the author developed hypothetical alternate formats, as though the poster were part of a campaign to promote an extensive film festival.

In the horizontal format, above, the same horizontal module count and margin proportions as in the original poster are used. The vertical format, right, multiplies the module at a reduced scale, creating new proportional relationships.

Sometimes imagery, rather than text, is the focus of a project—for example, in a poster, or in a coffee-table book. In such a case, it may be more desirable to define the grid structure based on the proportions of the images. (Even so, the typesetting attributes for text should still be considered, even though that aspect will be less important.) There are several ways to think about the imagery as a source for building a grid:

\_\_\_ If the proportions of images to be included all conform to the same aspect ratio (have the same width-to-height relationship), one might use this aspect ratio to

define the proportions of a module, and then build columns and rows based on that proportion. Images placed on the grid that results can be scaled to sizes defined by fields of modules; further, the proportions of typographic elements will share this logic with the images and seem intrinsically well-related to them. This strategy can be used for a single format project, like a poster, but the grid can easily be instituted in other formats to systematize a campaign or as part of a branding program. The margin measures among formats may stay the same, or they may change around the grouping of modules;

columns or rows of modules can be removed or added to, depending on the proportion of a given format; the entire group of modules can be scaled down as a unit to create a more detailed grid for complex uses, like a book, or scaled up as a unit to create a simplified version for bolder expression.

## Proportional Relationships Between Images and Formats

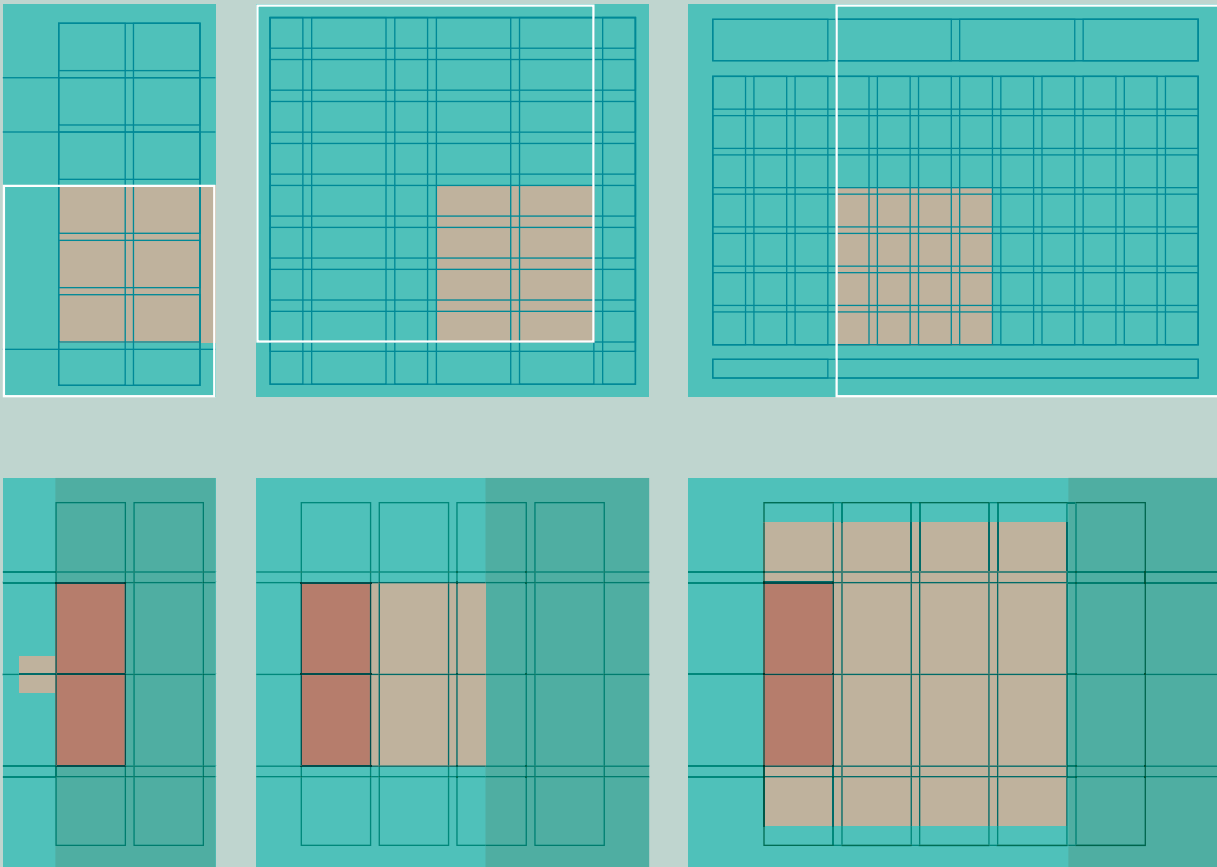
Another way of thinking about images as a source for building a grid is how their shapes relate to that of the format in which they'll appear. A difference in proportion between an image and its surrounding space can create dramatic tension that will almost guarantee a dynamic composition, even if only one image appears. Similar to the method described opposite, the shape of the image can be used to define a module; comparing two images of the same or different proportions, and finding some corresponding relationship between them, could yield a module that allows both to be shown at different scales and creates

a more detailed grid. But, a grid built this way could just as easily consist of columns whose measures happen to be some fractional subdivision of the image's width when it is sized as desired within the format area. How the designer conceives of the image-to-format relationship, and what kind of grid or method of deriving it is pursued, may take into account what other kinds of content need to accompany the images. If the supporting content isn't all that complex or varied, a very simple structure may be perfectly useful.

**A placeholder for a square-format image confronts each of the formats below (top row)—each time revealing secondary, square-based spatial breaks in a different way, due to the differences in the formats' respective proportions; each gives rise to a highly individuated grid as a result.**

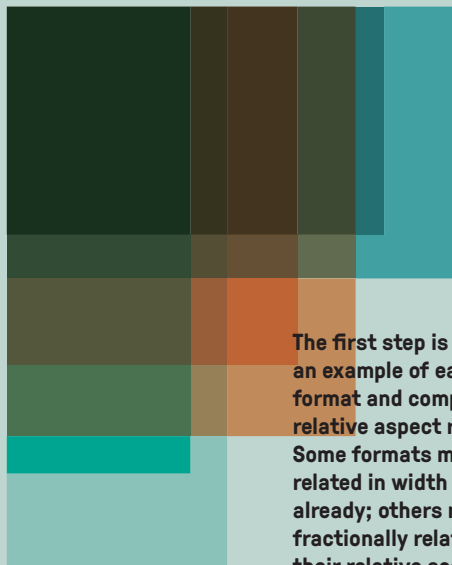
**Again, the same formats are shown but, this time, with grids based on relating two images to each format (bottom row).**

**The square image defines precisely the same vertically shaped area to its right in each format as a result of its changing size. The vertical space is a reference to the proportion of the second image. This logic gives rise to a grid that correlates the proportions of both images in all three formats as an integrated system.**

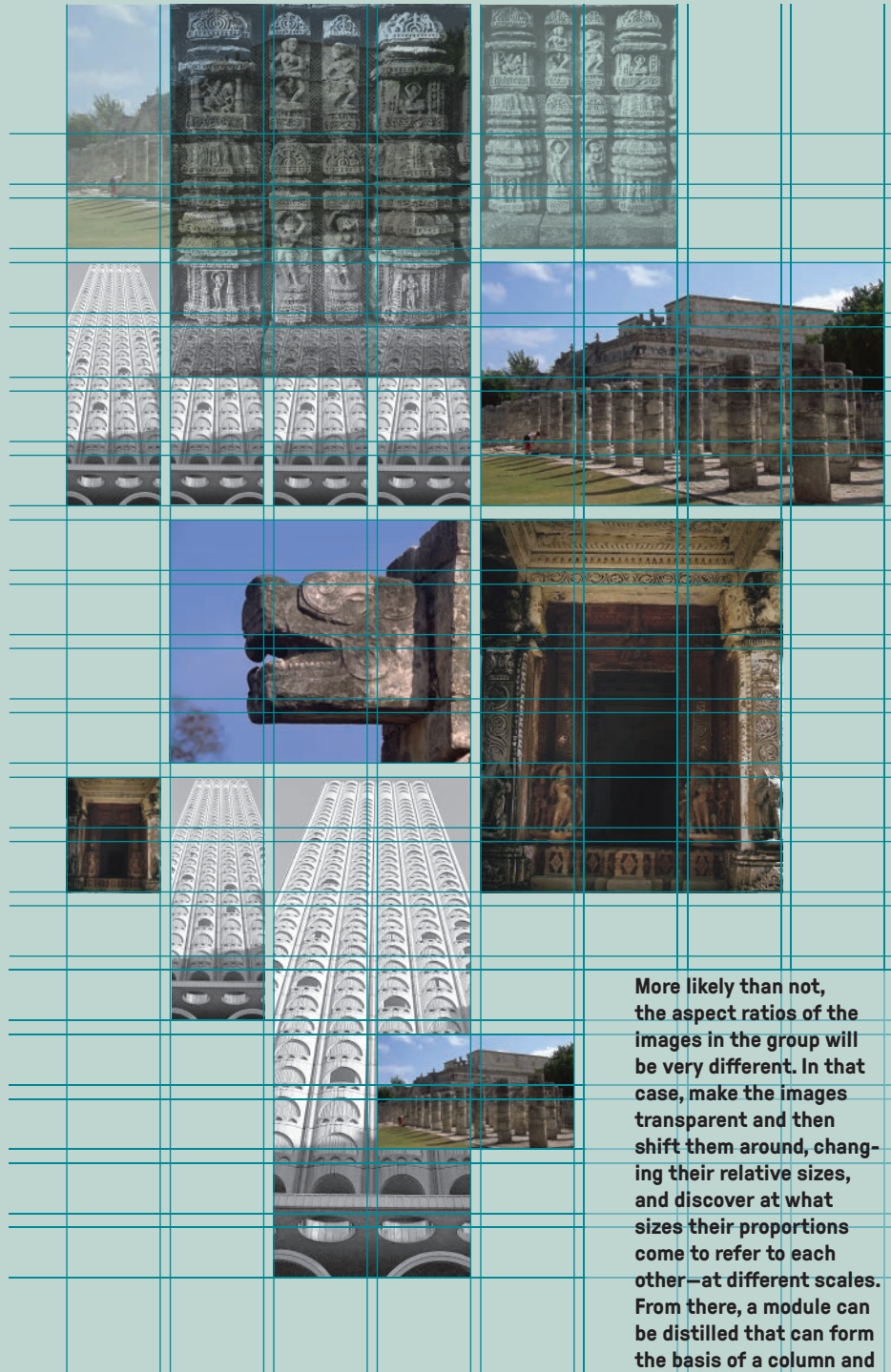


## Correlating Multiple Image Formats

When designing projects that show art work, such as monographs or exhibition catalogues, it's often the case that images will not be permitted to be cropped. That limitation should not hinder the designer's layout goals. In order to build a useful grid that will allow for layout flexibility—without cropping inset images—the designer must find some proportional relationship between the images to be included. If the images are all the same format, the strategies outlined on the preceding page spread are both workable. If the images are of many different formats (as would be likely in a catalogue for a group exhibition), the process becomes a bit more challenging—as is described in the hypothetical study shown here.



The first step is to select an example of each image format and compare their relative aspect ratios. Some formats may be related in width or depth already; others may be fractionally related if their relative scales change—if shrinking one, for instance, to match another's height, causes it to be half the width of the second image.



More likely than not, the aspect ratios of the images in the group will be very different. In that case, make the images transparent and then shift them around, changing their relative sizes, and discover at what sizes their proportions come to refer to each other—at different scales. From there, a module can be distilled that can form the basis of a column and row structure.



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## BUILDING A GRID

# Layout in a Responsive Context

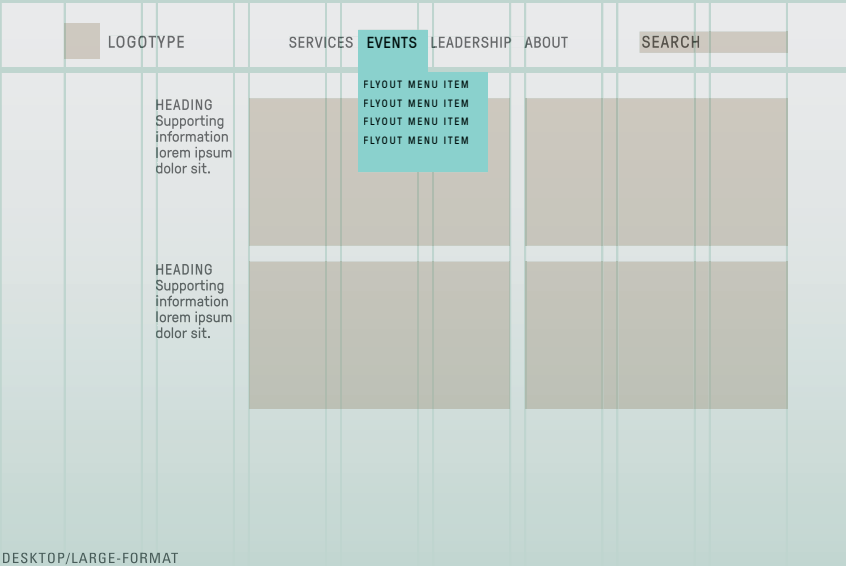
Control over layout parameters for screen-based design has come a long way since the Internet first came online in the mid-1990s. Today, designers have nearly the same facility for precision in Web-based layout as they do for print. Grid use in UX design has come to the fore as the result of the need to structure online communications to adapt to browsing within format interfaces of extreme difference in size; the grid's modularity lends itself to designing flexible systems of this very nature.

— Challenges continually arise in attempting to maintain the presence of the structure—aided by rigorously templated development

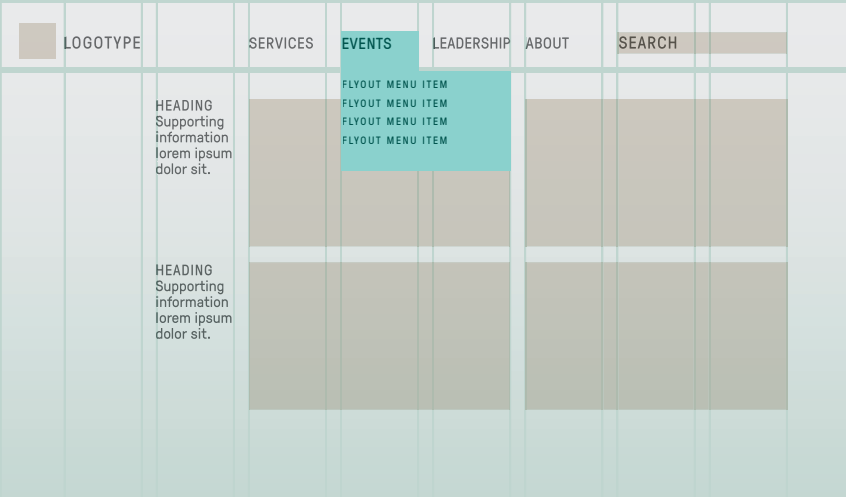
tools—while achieving a recognizably unique visual presentation that doesn't appear templated. Although the limitations of device-specific screen size are typically considered from the outset of a project with regard to functionality, a project's look and feel are likely developed within the desktop browser's larger screen space—discrepancies in the structure reveal themselves as designers work to unify stylistic compositional aspects. Incongruities such as these—misalignments between navigation and content areas, conflicts between symmetrical and asymmetrical arrangements, loss of import-

ant margin area needed for particular compositional gestures—are common problems. Resolving them well means conceiving the grid structure from the column or module outward, rather than reverse engineering it from a fully developed grid structure defined for the large-browser experience.

DESKTOP/LARGE-FORMAT



DESKTOP/LARGE-FORMAT



Using default template structures or themes potentially creates two kinds of structural conflict:

First, between symmetry and asymmetry, which typically manifests itself in misalignments between navigational and content elements, especially when the browser resizes; and second, between different uses of space, which is problematic if specific layout gestures are intrinsic to a brand's visual identity or behavior.

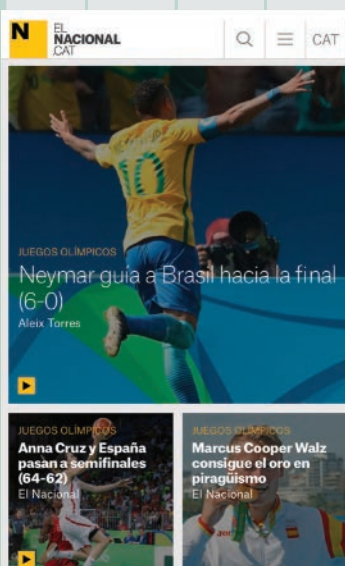
Both kinds of conflict appear in the top examples, but are resolved in the lower examples.

SMARTPHONE



SMARTPHONE





A 16-column grid provides device-specific layouts in permutations of 2-, 4-, and 8-module configuration—while supporting consistently sized and spaced navigation throughout. These conditions could be achieved only by building the structure outward from a base grid defined by the smallest screen format.

Atlas / Spain



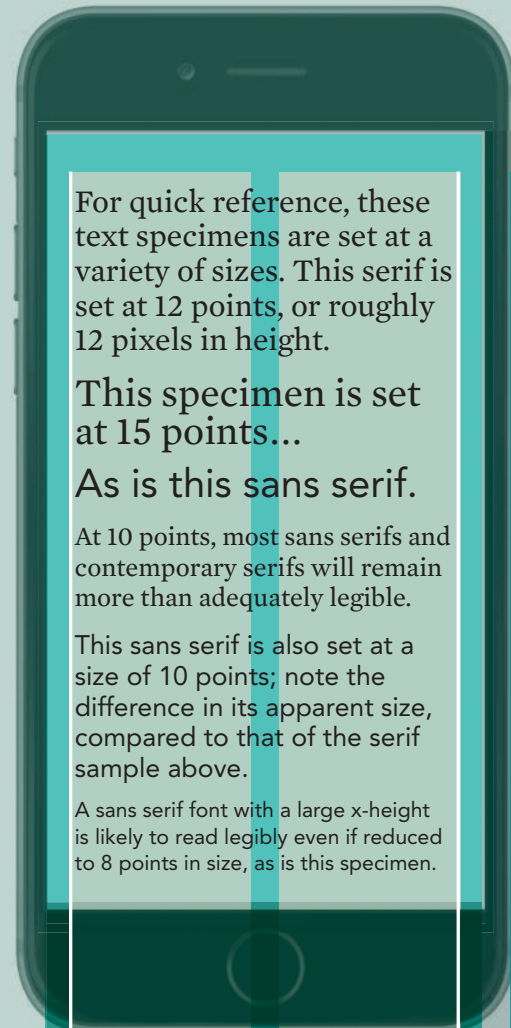
Establishing a grid structure for an interactive experience should be no different than for a brochure or newspaper; all the same considerations and methods under discussion still apply... except that designers must now anticipate how a layout designed for a large-format desktop monitor will translate to the small screen of a smartphone.

The limited screen area of a typical smartphone (shown here at actual size) imposes an unavoidable physical reality. However, any perceived restriction it might impose with regard to type or image sizes is made up for by its particular width, which will accommodate a range of legible type sizes with more or less optimal attributes.

Starting with the smartphone screen format as the basis for a column structure, then, is almost a no-brainer. Its “ready-made” column width presents an opportunity to problem-solve: Whatever layout might be desirable in the large format screen will do best by working here, first.

Working from small screen to large, developing a grid is a matter of arranging columns of the smartphone width side-by-side to fill the increasing screen area. The base column can be subdivided for greater flexibility and layout variation.

This diagram demonstrates the part-to-whole relationship that can be achieved between smallest and largest screen formats by using the smartphone screen proportion as a base column. Even if that column is subsequently subdivided, the grid will maintain a consistent proportion among all formats and enforce visual continuity throughout.



PHONE  
360 x 640

For quick reference, these text specimens are set at a variety of sizes. This serif is set at 12 points, or roughly 12 pixels in height.

This specimen is set at 15 points...

As is this sans serif.

At 10 points, most sans serifs and contemporary serifs will remain more than adequately legible.

This sans serif is also set at a size of 10 points; note the difference in its apparent size, compared to that of the serif sample above.

A sans serif font with a large x-height is likely to read legibly even if reduced to 8 points in size, as is this specimen.

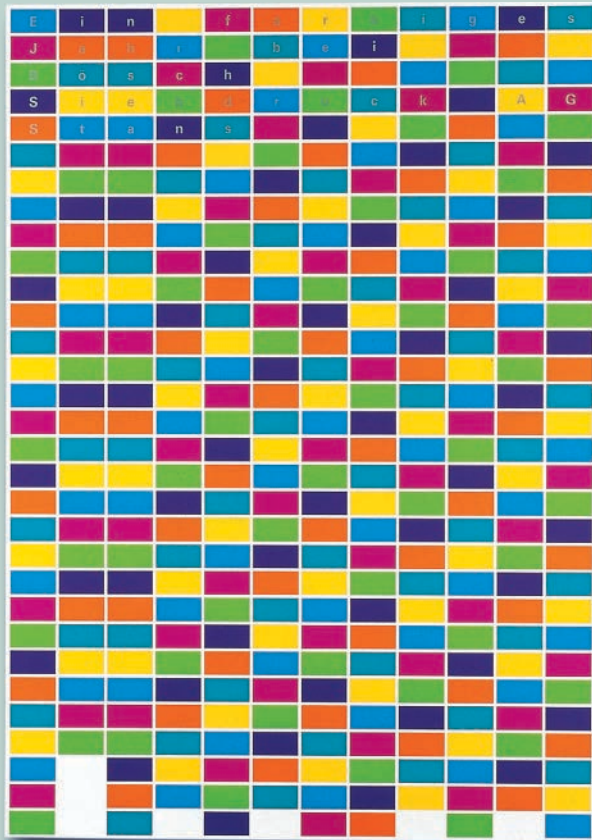
Material sized to, and situated within, the rightward columns in a large-screen format will reorient as a single-column, vertical scroll position when the browser closes down to smartphone format.

—  
This represents a dramatic shift in compositional emphasis, from emphatically horizontal—in which the verticality of the columns adds contrast—to overtly vertical, in which row divisions assume an increased level of importance.

—  
A layout change this pronounced has the potential to disunify a branded experience, so it's important that strong horizontal breaks and alignments of a similar quality as will appear in the small format are built into the large format presentation to ensure continuity.

The conventional browsing functionality for Web-based media is that of scrolling. That means that information at the top of the screen will disappear when the user scrolls down the page; it may also mean that important content may not be accessed until the user reaches the page's lower end.

—  
Pinning elements, so that they remain in place while the page scrolls, is a useful way to ensure that critical content—especially brand messages and navigation—are continually present. The designer must take into account the pinned item's location and size, and its potential to obscure (or be obscured by) content that scrolls through it.



**The modular grid in this New Year's poster reveals the cyclical nature of repeating days—coded by color that also evokes a celebration of confetti.**

Niklaus Troxler Design / Switzerland

#### BENEDICTUS

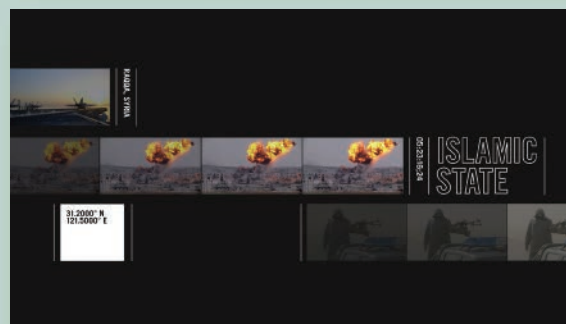
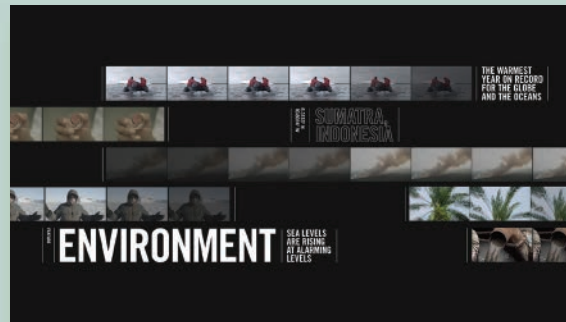
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#### BENEDICTUS

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malefectus sunt.

**Symmetry preceded asymmetry as an organizing principle, developed in the context of a religious institution; thus, symmetrical layouts are usually interpreted as classical or authoritative, while asymmetrical layouts impart a modern, or more casual, quality.**

Structure itself can be a message—designers will want to consider how various layout conventions may be interpreted on cultural, historical, and associational levels by their audiences (alongside the practical methods previously discussed) as yet another means of constructing a grid. Sometimes, a grid of particular proportions or shaping refers to some other experience in a nearly pictorial way; at others, its influence may be more subtle, imparting a certain compositional emphasis that may be appreciated subconsciously, rather than intellectually.



**This motion design sequence opens a documentary/news program with images and text that rapidly slides—frame by frame—through a modular grid that alludes to the editing bay used for post-production in video and film work. In doing so, it promotes an interpretation of authenticity in reportage by revealing the process of its creation and suggesting that the news is so up-to-the-minute that the stories are still being edited.**

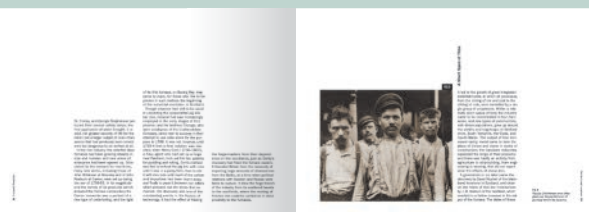
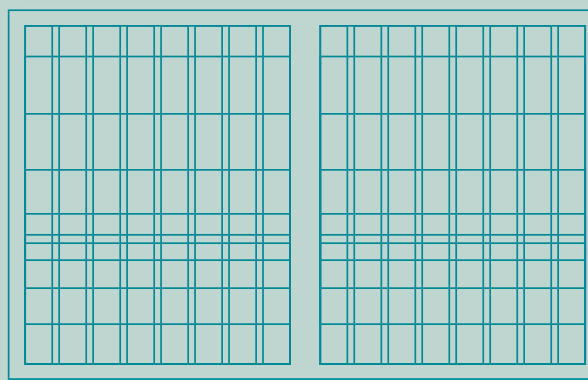
Gretel / USA





The grid for this magazine, which celebrates the human condition in all its aspects, builds a proportional row structure from a low horizon guide. Despite pronounced verticality in some layouts, the reader's eye is continually pulled "groundward" to that horizon—the earth upon which the reader exists.

Thomas Ockerse / USA



A book about the Industrial Revolution uses a modular grid pushed low by a deep head margin. The result is that text columns and images

take on a pictorial quality, suggesting rising buildings in a cityscape. Designer unknown; Timothy Samara / USA, Instructor



The quadrant structure of this cover system plays off the publication's title, and also notes a fundamental truth: the seasons divide the year into quarters. As each issue's season marker travels from one sector to another in clockwise rotation, the quality of time being marked, clock-like, imparts a reassuring continuity.

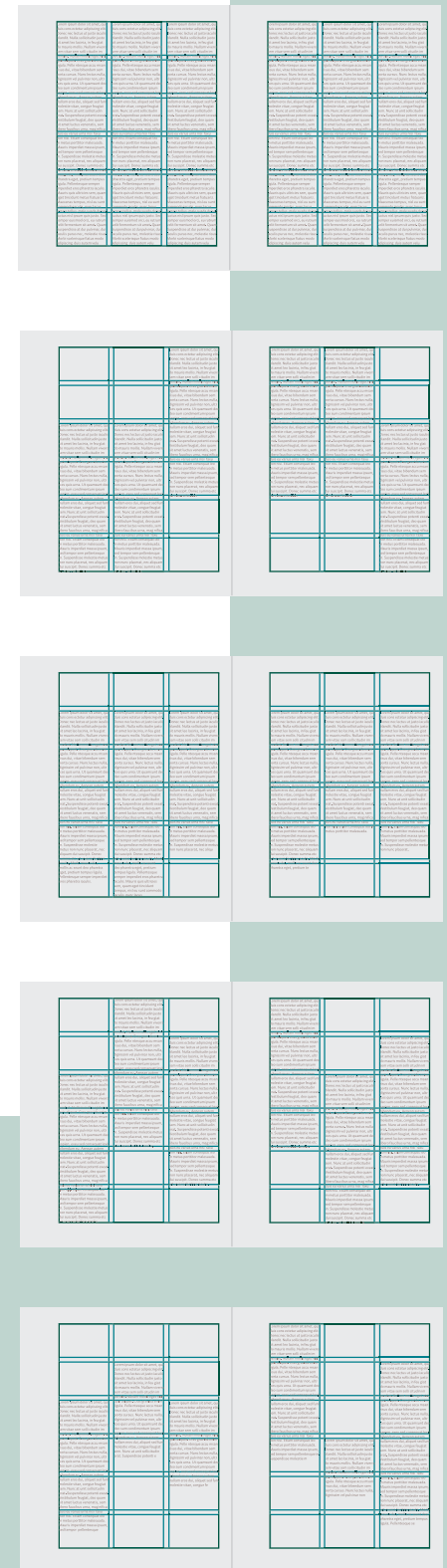
Level Design Group / USA



Building a project's grid addresses the functional aspects of its content and general organization—but it's a starting point. The real work begins with establishing how the material will be articulated within the grid: What kinds of scale relationships will exist among elements? What rhythm might compositions express? How geometric or ordered is the material's appearance, or how organic? Even with the simplest grid, the possibilities of approach are myriad.

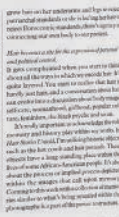
**This series of layouts alludes to the spectrum of compositional possibility that is possible on just one relatively simple structure—shown here ordered from the fullest and most static to the most open and dynamic.**

**Material justified to the margins, or to specific module depths, creates a rigid geometry. Hanging material provides a measure of consistency, balanced by their changing depth. Material that changes hangline and depth offers the most organic and flexible quality of arrangement.**



## MAKING AND BREAKING THE GRID

Atlas / Spain



Yoojung Kang / USA





## Degrees of Articulation



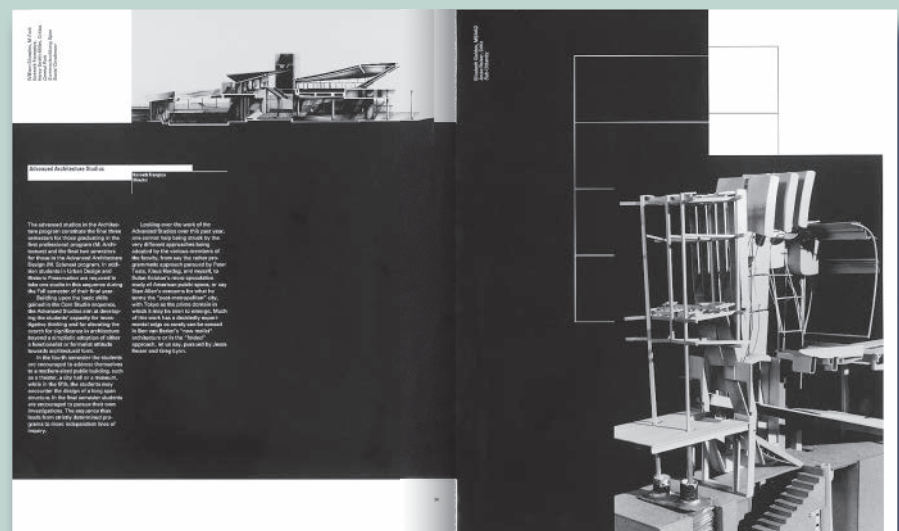
Each of these three projects fills its grid structure to greater or lesser degrees. The newspaper at left is full to the margins; the page becomes more of a texture, interrupted by the dark image masses. In the brochure below, the space is relatively full, but a number of modules in the grid are left open to encourage movement through the puzzle-like architecture.

The publication at bottom pushes content to the exterior of the body, creating an undefined, open space for the majority of the page spread.

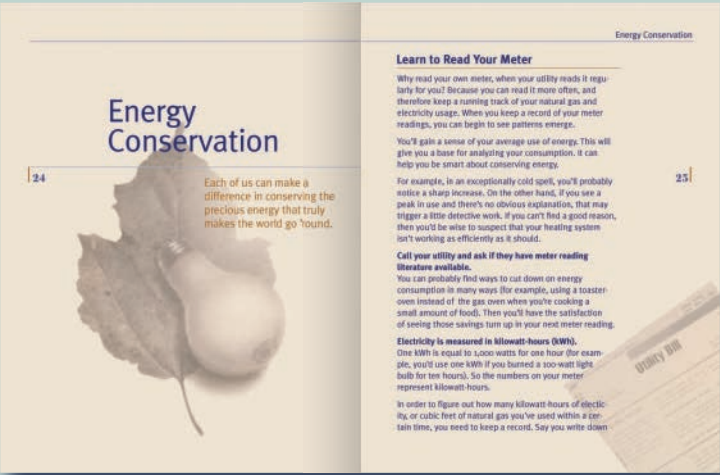
Pentagram / UK [left]  
Paone Design Associates / USA [middle]  
Willi Kunz Studio / USA [bottom]



One of a designer's first considerations is how "full" the compositional space ought to appear—that is, to what degree the body is filled by content to its margins. A little mystery—leaving columns or modules open, not revealing the structure at every juncture—goes a long way toward achieving a dynamic experience. Sometimes this aspect comes down not to a purposeful decision, but rather to the relation of content volume to page count; even so, a designer must be able to maintain some negative space to provide areas of visual rest.



# Margin Measures and Body Position



Almost independent of what kind of grid is being used, an essential decision to be made is how the body (and articulation of content) will relate to the format: Will it be positioned symmetrically (mirroring) or asymmetrically (offsetting) on each page, relative to the page opposite? Will the content be oriented toward a spread's interior, or pushed outward toward the foreedges? Each decision will result in a remarkably different feel for the layouts.

\_\_\_ The primary positioning of content can be effected with the margins alone, using different measures for each margin to orient the body in different locations relative to the

page format; or, added "false" margin may be built into the structure itself, meaning that a column that is part of the grid may be left open to act as a margin space. This option leaves the designer some flexibility for using that space should the need arise.

**The two projects above, left, situate the body symmetrically in the spread. The top one does this with actual margins; the one below uses outer columns to create added margins.**

Timothy Samara / USA [top]  
Ideas On Purpose / USA [bottom]

**The two projects directly above offset the body to the left on each page, creating asymmetrical structure.**

Kari Porter / USA [top]  
Robert McConnell / USA [bottom]

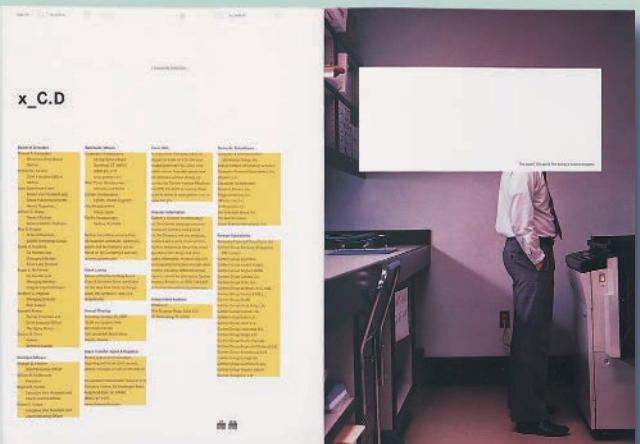


Modularity, Shaping, and Directional Emphasis



Text and image components in these magazine spreads piece together around the modules, imparting a thoughtful, constructive quality that supports its subject matter: artisanal craftsmanship.

Yoojung Kang / USA

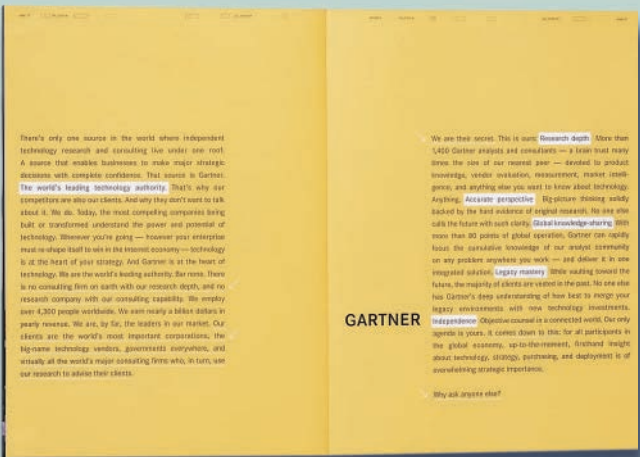


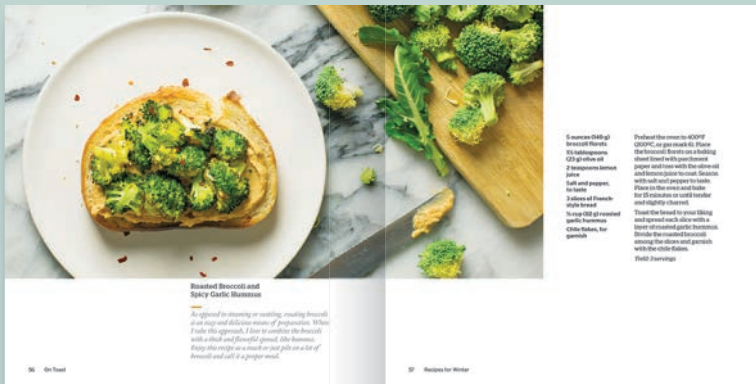
The annual report spreads above and below enforce a geometric rigidity by constraining content to only a portion of the module structure. The resulting austerity is quite analytical, supporting the client's credibility

as a provider of cybersecurity services. The modular geometry integrates with images as overlaid blank boxes.

Cahan & Associates / USA

Compositional elements, whether headlines, paragraphs of text, or images, create shapes and establish movement and rhythm through a space. How they do so, interacting with the grid that is guiding their relative scales and positions, must be defined as a specific characteristic based on the functional needs of the information but, perhaps more importantly, in relation to the subject matter to be communicated. By establishing a particular compositional idea and carrying it out across all the project's parts, even on a merely formal level, a designer also works toward building a cohesive totality.





The image and the typography establish a set of opposing, overlapping angles—like L-brackets crossing their corners—and this logic was applied to all the page spreads in this recipe book. That decision was mostly a formal one: a way of visually connecting the

two kinds of material while creating contrast needed to counter the repetition of mostly horizontal-format images throughout.

Timothy Samara / USA



A strong hangline at the top of this brochure layout—which carves out a consistent area for visual rest—creates a focused, regular horizontality in contrast to the pronounced vertical rhythm of text and images.

C. Harvey Graphic Design / USA



These page spreads from a publisher's catalogue use the same grid in different ways—creating a marked visual difference between sections that serve different purposes. The spread at top promotes new releases; the spread at bottom

is a more conventional catalogue listing. Both, despite their overall differences, share a strong, up/down vertical rhythm. Frost\*collective / Australia



## Qualities of Depth and Surface Activity



A quality of geometric precision pervades this webpage design, with content filling the columns to the margins. While the planar masses of the images contribute some sense of depth to the space, the gutters between columns and rows are

very pronounced; optically, one becomes somewhat conscious of the white, linear armature they create.

Studio Blue / USA

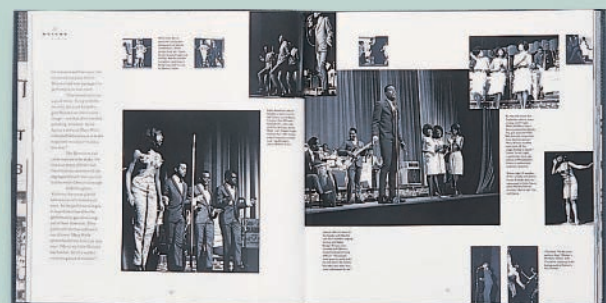
The degree to which a grid is articulated will have an impact on the perception of space—whether it seems flat, with material appearing to slide across the surface; or whether it seems deep, as though the material within the space exists on dimensional layers in a foreground, middle ground, and background. In general, the fuller the page, and the more alignments within the grid that are explicitly marked by compositional elements, the flatter the appearance of the page; this quality is also exaggerated by the presence of elements that are similar in scale, as well as by large amounts of text which, being linear

and textural, will more likely be felt as surface activity, rather than as dimensional planes or objects of mass. Conversely, the more columns, rows, or modules left open, the deeper the space will seem—pictorial elements and text will take on the quality of independent, floating objects. Greater variety in the shapes and proportions of negative spaces, too, will add to a perception of deeper space (as well as greater movement), as will strong contrasts in the relative sizes of elements.

The two layouts below employ modular grids. The one directly below appears flatter because modules are articulated as geometric planes that directly abut each other. The layout lower on the page, however, creates the appearance

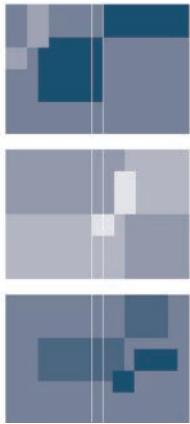
of objects floating in a deep, dimensional space by virtue of their separation, contrasts in size, and open modules.

Frankfurt Balkind Partners / USA [top]  
Sheila deBretteville / USA [bottom]



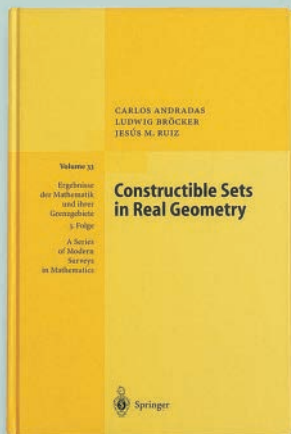


## Variation and Violation

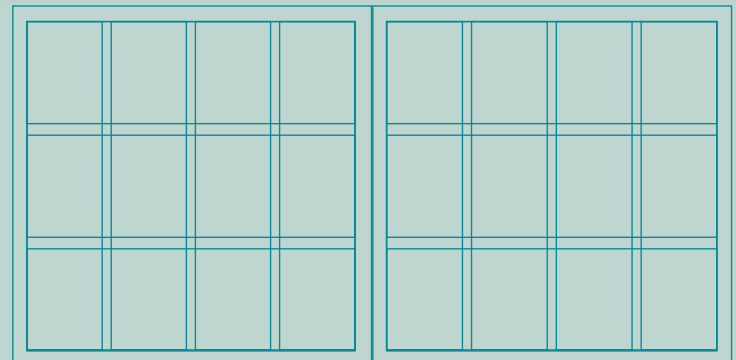
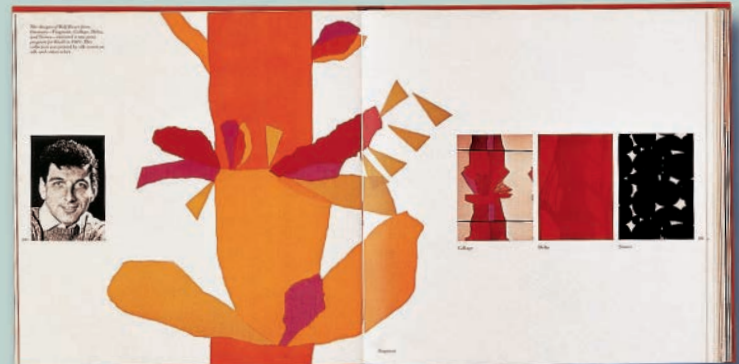


A system's expression lies on a continuum between rigid and organic. The designers of this book cover system built extensive variation into its governing rules, formalizing an organic family of layout options that could be implemented to anticipate different requirements.

Meta Design AG / Germany



A grid is successfully implemented only if a designer rises above the uniformity implied by its structure and uses it to create a dynamic visual experience that sustains interest page after page, screen after screen. The greatest danger in using a grid is to succumb to its regularity. It's important to remember two notions in this regard: First, that a system exists to encourage flexibility—its rules are made to allow a range of expression; and second, that the grid is a guide—to be followed as much as possible, but deviated from if there's a good reason to do so. Grids don't make dull layouts—designers do.

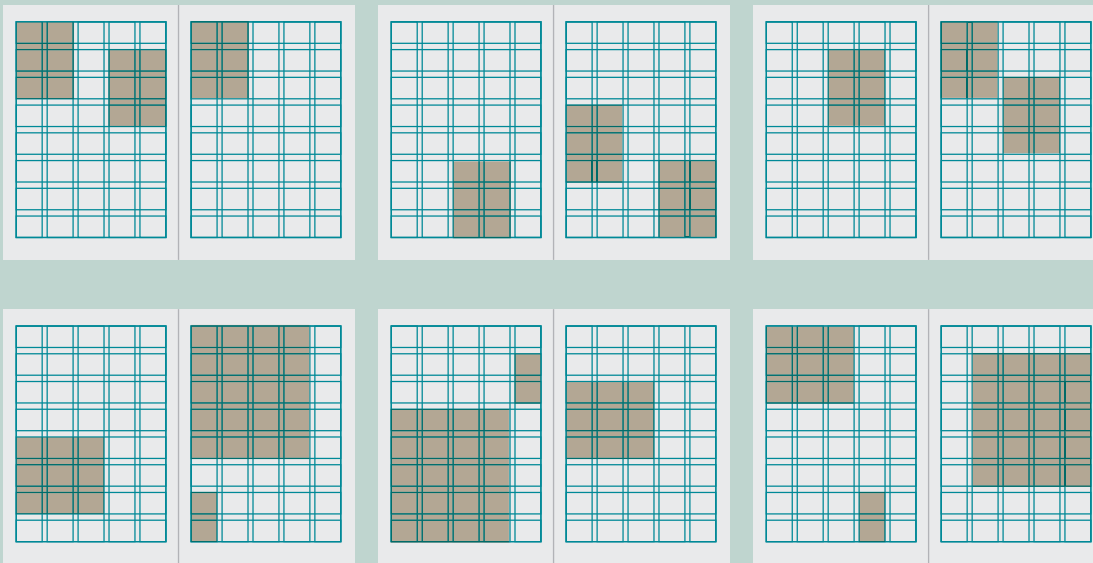


These two book spreads demonstrate effective variation of an exceptionally simple modular grid. The designer's use of alternating spatial zones from page to page accomplishes three goals: the change from horizontal to vertical emphasis enhances visual

interest; it serves to reinforce the grid by making its presence known in multiple ways; and it creates a rhythmic sense of unity between the pages.

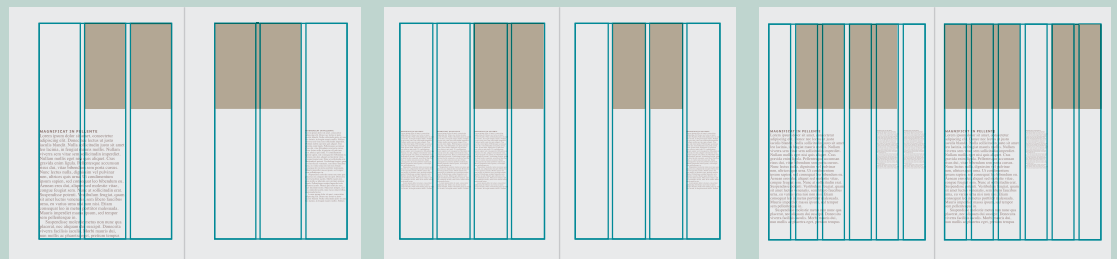
Vignelli Associates / USA



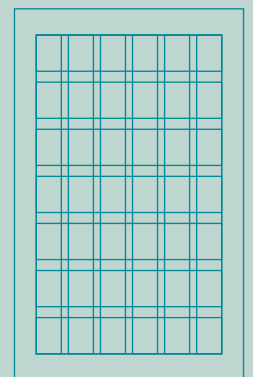


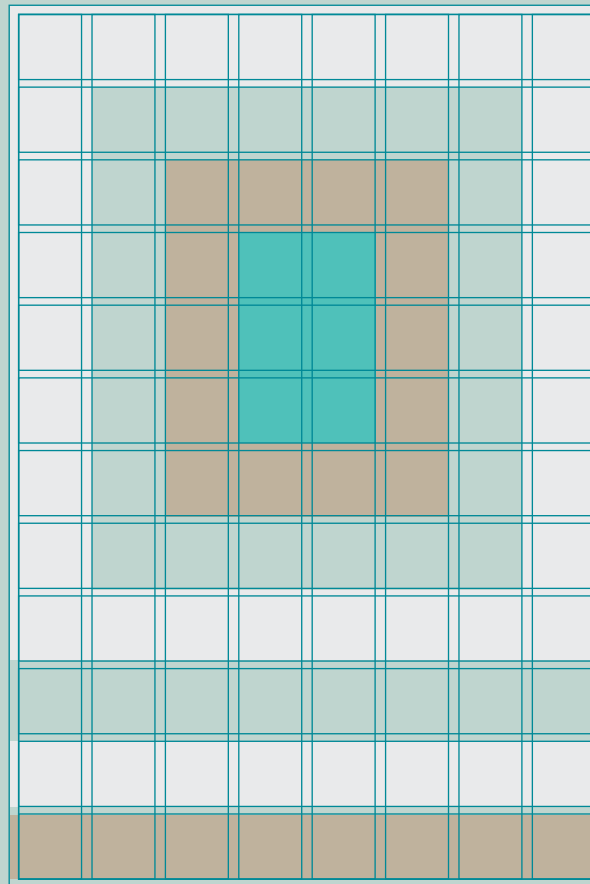
A simple trick to achieving layout variation is to alternately cluster images toward the top or bottom from spread to spread; another is to force a small, medium, and large image onto a spread—and then use the same sizes, but placed in different locations, on the next spread. These basic strategies create what could be termed “bounce” from spread to spread.

Articulating material across several column structures within the same project—but using similar positioning logic throughout—creates a tremendous difference in the overall rhythm of the layouts while retaining a certain unity.



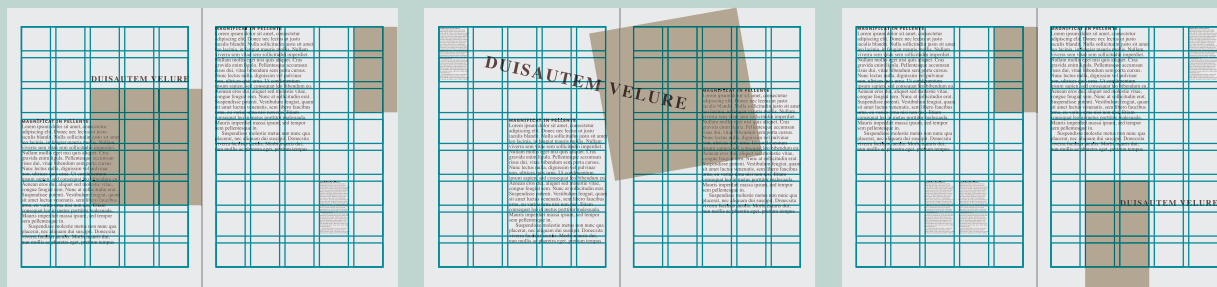
These two spreads make use of both strategies described above.  
Level Design Group / USA





The large format of a poster provides an opportunity to explore variation in its structure in different areas, as happens in this one: It uses an 8-column modular grid, expressed in two ways—as a conventional hanglined column structure at the bottom, and in the form of a concentric frameset above. Furthermore, the grid is also violated by a secondary structure—a system of diagonal channels that are based on the row measure—and more so by irregular illustrative forms.

Chermayeff, Geismar & Haviv [Steff Geissbühler] / USA



Occasionally ignoring a rigorous grid has a dramatic effect on pacing and hierarchy. In this study, just such an instance stands out among a series of layouts that are heavily structured. The resulting surprise breathes life into the sequence and highlights featured content.

The layout of this publication—based on a simple, large-measure, 2-column grid—benefits visually from being constantly violated by image and text elements that cross gutters, push outside the true

margins, and intrude into the text fields. The structure was purposefully designed to integrate this kind of transgressive behavior.

Level Design Group / USA



The grid used for this cookbook has been violated in two ways. In the spread at top, the gold-hued callout, set in an italic, Neoclassical serif, ignores alignment and width proportions entirely. Otherwise, the material is shaped and ordered very geometrically. On the spread below that,

the chapter-opening content is arranged symmetrically—in contrast to the hard edges and asymmetric arrangement elsewhere.

Kiyoko Shiromasa / USA

## Sequence and Pace

Building off the idea of variation, the rhythmic pacing of visual presentation from part to part in a system within a sequence-based format can be a powerful means of keeping the implementation of a grid lively. Pacing can be understood as a kind of cadence or “timing” a viewer will apprehend from one part to another, as well as the degree of dynamism or activity they perceive.

— By varying this rhythm from slow to fast, or from quiet to dynamic, the designer can accomplish several goals. One of these is strictly visual: Each new screen or page spread engages the reader in a new way. Another result might be that the reader is cued to a significant content change, thereby clarifying informational function. To some degree, the pacing of material relates directly

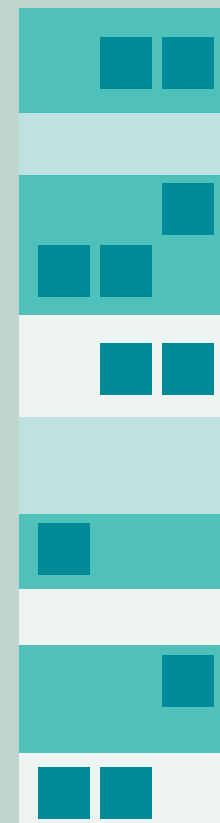
to its ordering, or distribution. The ordering process accounts for location and actual sequence of raw content, whereas pacing is concerned with the formal variation that has been imposed upon it—ordering is about function; pacing is about feeling.

— Indeed, such organization may be an intrinsic part of the concept that governs the visual presentation of the content. The designer may get some sense of a project’s potential pacing while ordering its content, but it ultimately depends on the message he or she is trying to convey with the system’s rules. Throughout a sequence of page spreads in a publication, for example, application of the system’s rules for the sizes, weights, and styles of various text elements will automatically create a recognizable

rhythm that will likely support the informational hierarchy. However, this intrinsic pacing may seem too even, or quietly paced, in the context of his or her concept; or, the designer may decide that this quietness is appropriate, but notices that some content elements could benefit from a pacing change that employs another of the system’s formal rules to help emphasize or feature them. It could be argued that a project’s pacing should derive naturally from its content’s hierarchy, but it is up to the designer to balance this need with that of invigorating the viewer.

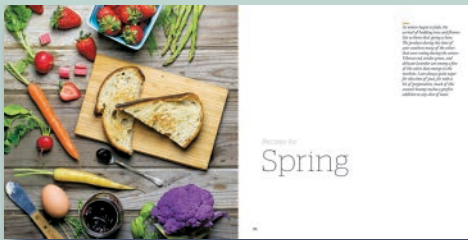


Although pacing is somewhat intuitive, being methodical may initially allow the designer to see how a pacing strategy will unfold over a given sequence of material. By conceiving, in simplest terms, of visual states to be achieved, and creating for each an abstract or iconic sketch, a designer may quickly rough out a storyboard for a pacing strategy.



In the context of a scrolling webpage—where a grid’s compositional field is contiguous—the notion of pacing focuses on lateral positioning of elements, in concert with changes in the depths and widths of masses.



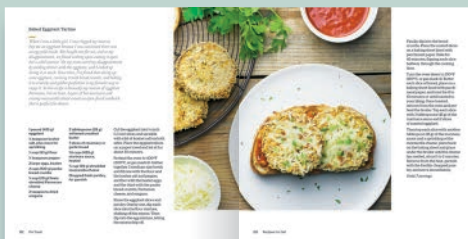


The pacing logic that governs this sequence of page spreads is actually simple, despite how complicated it might appear at a glance. The first spread is representative of chapter openers—the only instance in which

a spread is divided in half by a full-page image bleed. From there, images alternate in high/low and left/right position, whether there's one image or two. If an image appears at a large size on one spread, it's followed

by a smaller image on the next, then a large one, and so on. Text material responds to these simple alternations in suit.

Timothy Samara / USA





## Integrating Formats and Media



Grids can be especially effective for unifying complex, comprehensive campaigns or identity programs—where messaging, functionality, complexity, and medium are likely to be quite varied. It is in these situations where the tension between a grid's consistent architecture and its ability to flex for different purposes comes to the fore. If the designer has the opportunity to anticipate all (or most) of the materials intended for production, the formats of various communications can all be outgrowths of a column or module proportion—or vice versa. By regulating formats across touchpoints and media, the designer may achieve several goals: Most important, arguably, is greater visual cohesion. Interrelating formats means they can be used harmoniously together; further, formats produced by similar processes are more likely to be able to be produced simultaneously and, therefore, more inexpensively.

All images on this page spread:  
Studio di Progettazione Grafica  
[Sabina Oberholtzer, AGI and  
Renato Tagli] / Switzerland



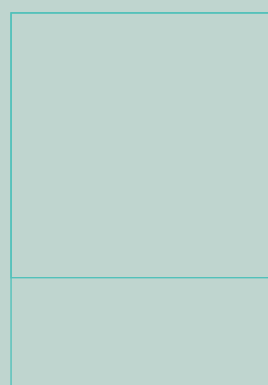
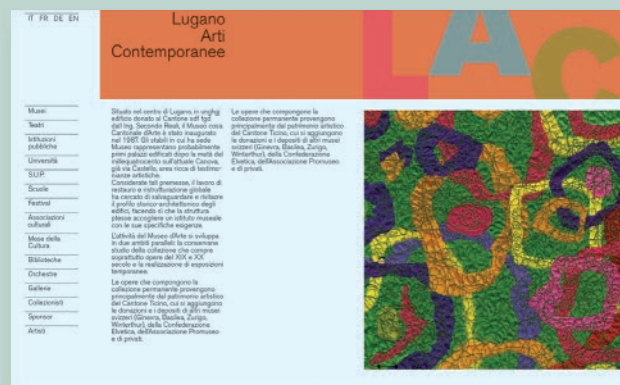
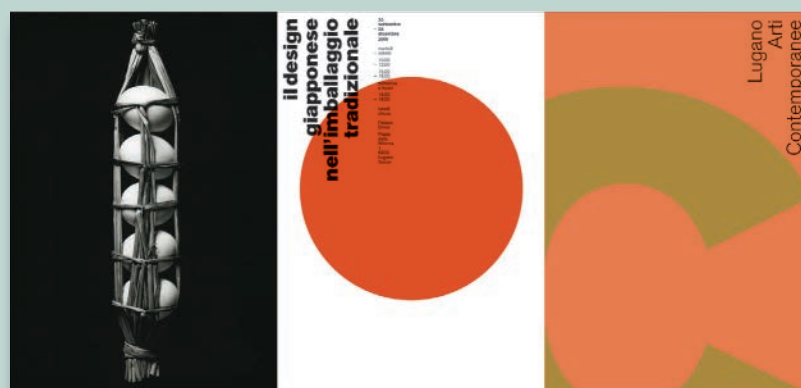
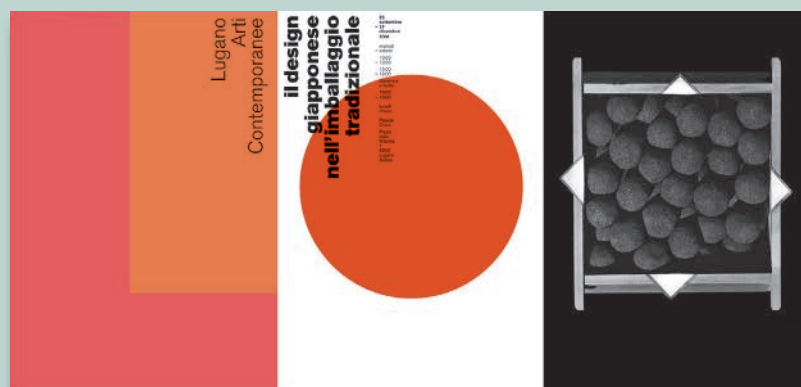
A vast array of touchpoints, or applications, within the brand system for an art museum gives credence to the notions that grids are built to encompass variation, and that they can be used to cohesively orchestrate the visual language of a complex program across multiple media—without becoming monotonously repetitive.

The museum's logo itself is the source of the grid, based on three squares defined by its initial letters. The base three-square grid can be added to, one module at a time, to create strips of extended proportion that include the museum's full name (in several languages),

and that can act as heading elements on stationery or the webpage, as elongated banners, and as freestanding signage kiosks.

On the museum's website, the grid forms the basis of a 4-column structure, while navigation exists outside of it, distinguishing it from content.

A secondary structural relationship, in the form of an alignment dropped from the initial L's left-most edge, appears in both the website and the stationery.



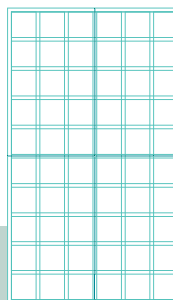
ISO “world-size” posters are organized on a substructure, also defined by the initial L and the square. The ISO format system derives from the proportions of the Golden Section; the square is an intrinsic component of its mathematical relationships. Visual information in the posters is situated to reveal that square, while the measure of the L's vertical stroke proportions text, running vertically—which captures the “strip” quality of the logo.

# Exhibits

Each exhibit is supported with a label and diagram that describe its structure, followed by credits, a general overview, and a list of related exhibits for comparison— from left to right, across the top of the page.

—  
The exhibit comparisons from both sections are numbered and color coded for easy reference.

## Modular Grid



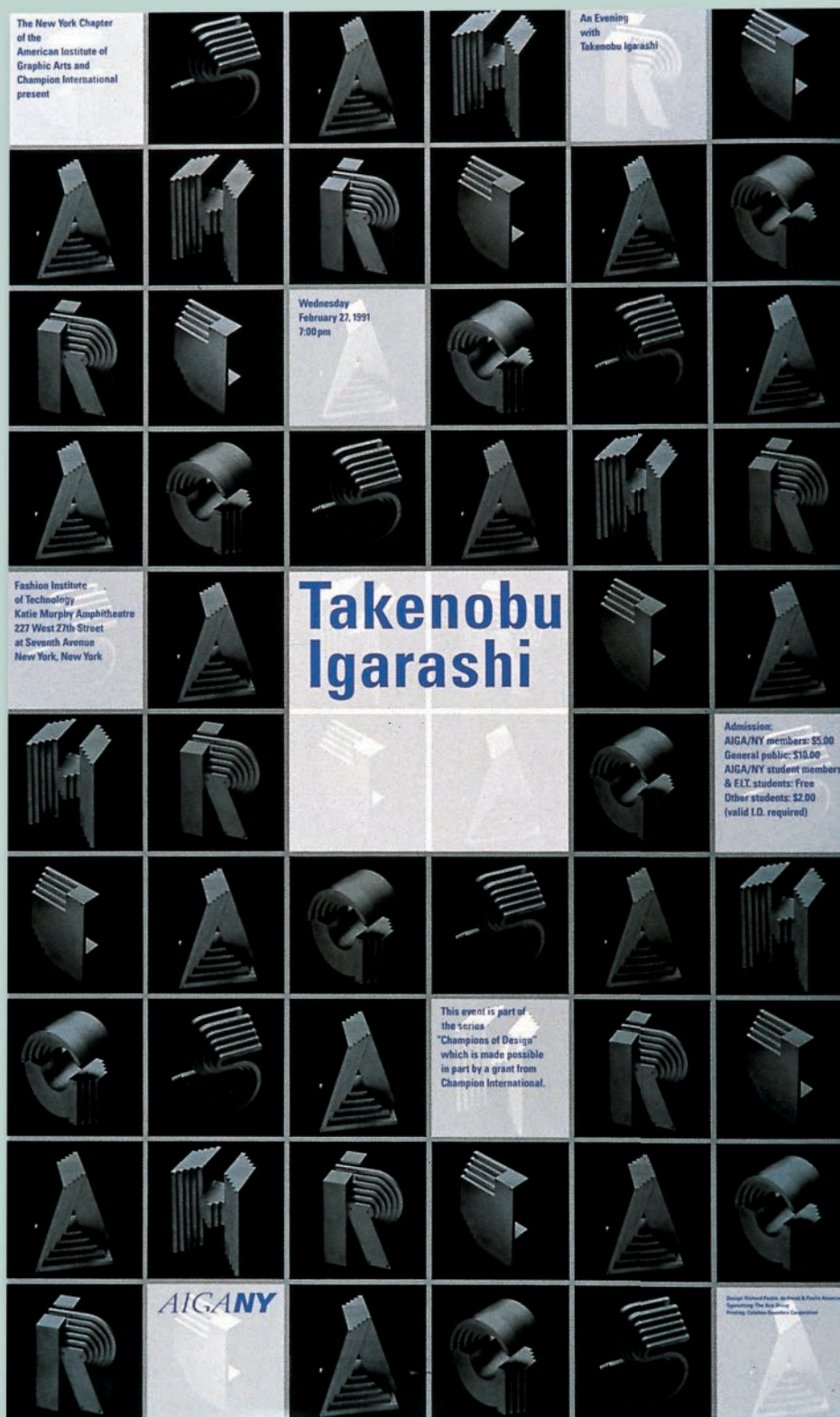
DESIGN

**Poulin+Morris**  
New York, NY | USA

**Poster for an exhibition  
sponsored by the American  
Institute of Graphic Arts**

EXHIBIT COMPARISONS

03 06 07 10 11 21  
23 24 25 32  
05 09 28 35 14

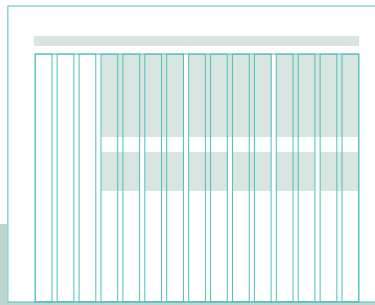


Japanese designer Igarashi's signature three-dimensional letterform sculptures fill a modular grid in this exhibition poster. The grid is used to provide distinct components of information—venue, date and time, event sponsor—and as a convenient way to group dozens of photographs of the letter sculptures. Thoughtful placement of individual images sets up optical rhythms within the rows and columns of square snapshots, almost like the storyboard of a film sequence. Because the information is sparse and discontinuous, the gutter measures between modules can be small; their linearity adds contrast to the overall continuously planar formal quality of the visual field.

— The translucent white modules separate from the background to draw attention to specific information. Although they appear at first to be asymmetrically arranged, these modules are ordered in relation to the vertical central axis to express rotational symmetry; as a result, they create a set of interacting diagonal axes that reverse from top to bottom and left to right, exaggerating the kinetic, filmstrip-like movement in the poster.



## Column Grid / Hierarchic Modular Rows



### DESIGN

**Studio Blue**  
Chicago, IL | USA

**Website for a Jewish culture educational and research organization**

### EXHIBIT COMPARISONS

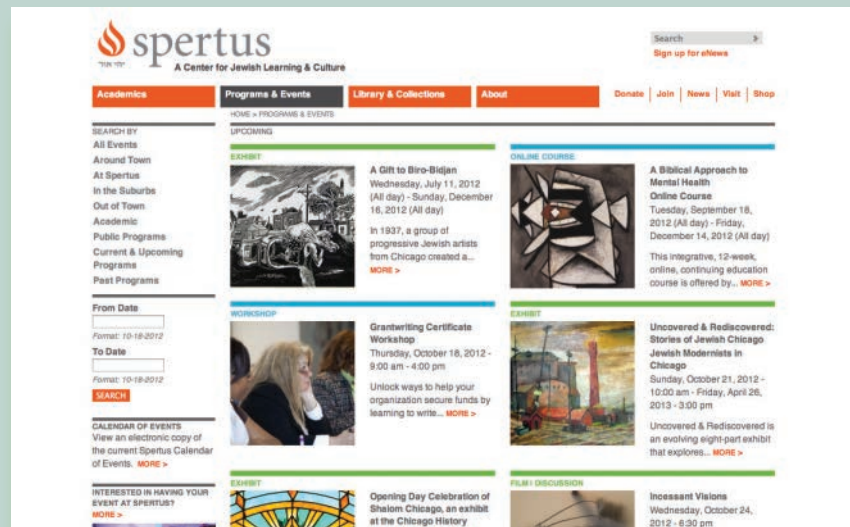
04 12 14 17 18 20 23  
26 29 30 31 33 34 35  
07 14 16 17 18 19 21  
25 32 34

This website's content is broken into four major categories, each of which is comprehensive in scope and itself parceled out into secondary and tertiary levels of increasing depth or focus. The designers used a 15-column grid to provide ample control over a wide variety of content types. The shallow band of global navigation across the header does not conform to the column structure.

\_\_\_ The limited selection of pages presented here shows several of the many possibilities for defining column widths that the grid provides. On the landing page (top), three columns of decreasing width progress across the page; the second example shows a modular, two-within-one configuration, doubled left to right; at bottom, a configuration of column widths that is strictly hierarchic, with the widths of text and image columns determined by their relative proportions for that kind of content.

\_\_\_ Although only columns are actually defined in the grid, the appearance of module-like elements (most often inset images) and, sometimes, module-based rows of information, occurs with some frequency. The "module" is really just a depth proportion based on a combination of column widths used for a particular element, and appears to generate a row structure when those kinds of squared content units align horizontally.

\_\_\_ Each of these kinds of configurations forms a template for pages of similar content within its respective section.

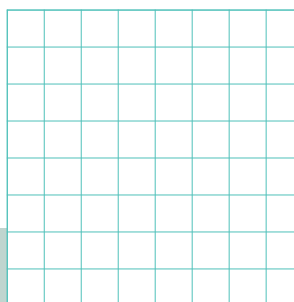




## Modular Grid / “Graph Paper” Variant

A comfortably proportioned modular grid provides overall branding continuity and endless layout variations for Springer, a publisher of textbooks. The program uses a grid of modules that, unlike other grids of this kind, butt each other like a chessboard. The lack of gutters or margins means that the actual book formats can be configured on the grid for greater consistency, and the gridded image areas always align with each other and with the book's spine and edges.

— The schematic shows the publisher's in-house designers a number of options for using the grid to vary the placement of images, type areas, and areas of flat color.



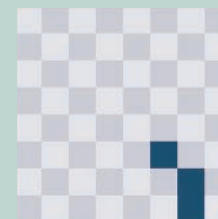
### DESIGN

**MetaDesign AG**  
Berlin | Germany

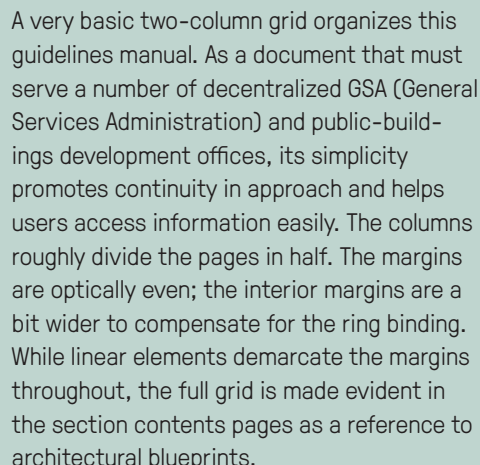
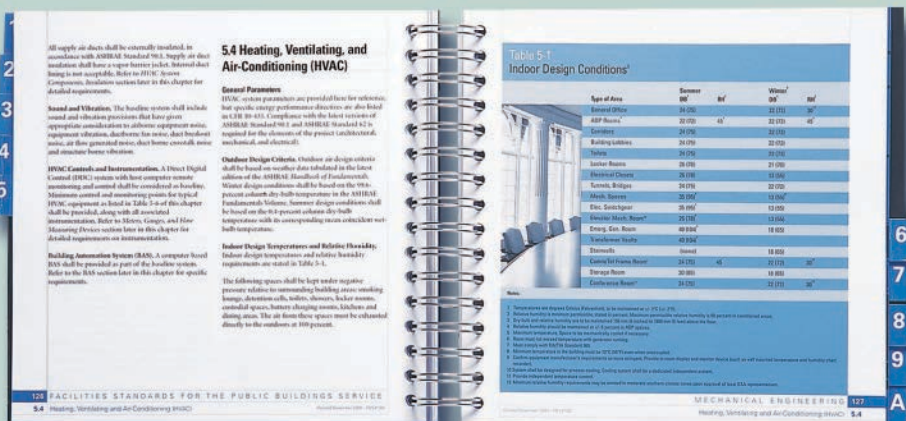
**Book cover layout  
system for Springer Verlag  
publishers**

### EXHIBIT COMPARISONS

01 06 07 09 10 15 17  
21 23 24 25 32 34  
02 05 07 09 13 25 28  
35



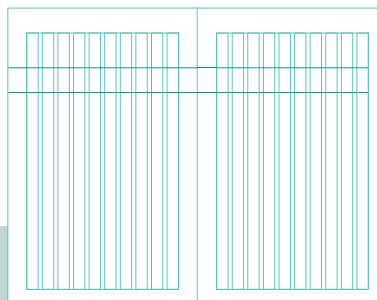




\_\_\_\_ Running section folios span the two columns, but at the foot of the page rather than at the top, giving precedence to the more important elements of the hierarchy: section headlines, subheads, and bulleted information.

Charts and tables are easily integrated into the grid and provide some variation within the straightforward page layouts. Tab dividers use the grid's margin frame as a decorative element, contrasting the large-scale section numerals and titles.

## Column Grid



## DESIGN

**Frost\*collective**  
Sydney | Australia

**Book catalogue system for**  
**Laurence King Publishing**

## EXHIBIT COMPARISONS

**02 05 08 12 14 18 20**  
**22 26 29 30 31 33 34**  
**35**  
**06 07 14 16 18 19 20**  
**21 24 25 29 34**

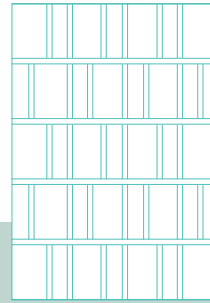
This quarterly publication promoting a publisher's catalog of offerings is designed using an unusual grid of 1-centimeter vertical divisions with two distinct flowlines, both at the top of the page. Each page in a spread is devoted to the display of a single book.

— The vertical center line of the page provides a consistent orientation point for the book's publication information, which flushes left from that line and hangs from the topmost flowline. A narrow horizontal band is defined by the space between the book's information and the beginning of the descriptive text. That text hangs from the second flowline, which also establishes the location of the page marker to the far right. Within the narrow horizontal band, the book's title—in a larger and bolder weight of the same sans serif face used for running text—is stacked upward from the lower flowline, line by line as needed.

— The multiple vertical divisions, meanwhile, allow the designer to introduce rhythm and movement to the text by shifting the paragraph alignment back and forth. Sometimes this shift accommodates the format of the book cover that is shown, and other times it is an optical response to the dynamics of the other elements in the spread. The left flush of the paragraph always returns to an alignment with the information hanging at the top to give resolution to the page.



## Modular Grid / Alternating Binary Increments



### DESIGN

Büro Uebele Visuelle  
Kommunikation  
Stuttgart | Germany

Exhibition poster for the  
Düsseldorf University of  
Applied Sciences

### EXHIBIT COMPARISONS

01 03 06 07 10 11 21  
23 24 25 32  
05 09 12 14 28 35



This poster makes use of an interesting grid that is based on the stroke/counter structure of its title's letterforms. In essence, there exists a binary structure of two modules, each of different width, that alternate sequentially from left to right, but show alignments vertically from row to row.

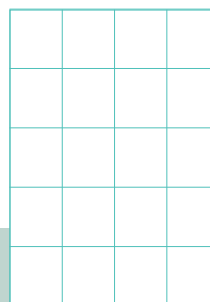
— One module's measure is represented by the width of the narrow stem in the letter H; another is represented by the wide stem of the letter E, or by the apparent "blocks" that appear to obscure letters such as the D and B in the third row from the top. The counterspaces—the negative area separating letters—are actually the row gutters.

— The designers adhere to this binary grid pretty rigorously, but there are instances where they've cheated the grid, combining a gutter with one of the narrower or wider modules in order to maintain a desired alignment between forms on different rows, or a particular rhythmic logic to the widths of elements as they proceed across a row.

— A small paragraph of text, together with the University's logotype, appear in red for contrast and visual interest.



## Modular Grid with Deviations



### DESIGN

**Niklaus Troxler Design**  
Willisau | Switzerland

**Poster for an exhibition  
of posters at the Willisau  
Rathaus**

### EXHIBIT COMPARISONS

**01 03 06 07 10 11 21**

**23 24 32**

**05 09 12 14 28 35**



This exhibition poster uses an exceptionally large module—relative to the proportion of the format—as the basis for its composition.

\_\_\_ The letters forming the exhibition's title are laid out in a 4 x 5 grid of vertically proportioned modules that bleed to the edges of the poster's format—there are no margins. The alternating black and white fields create backgrounds for the individual letters.

\_\_\_ Similar to conditions in the poster shown on the opposite page, the designer “cheats” his grid a little to ensure the legibility of the letters (as well as to improve the decisiveness of the shapes created along their adjacencies), shifting them upward or sideways to help reveal their forms, but the grid remains clearly present as an ordering structure.

\_\_\_ Overlaps and vibrating juxtapositions of black and white areas introduce detail variation on top of the regular understructure. The dramatic scale of the title gives way to a more focused column of time and date description in the far right column.

## Modular Grid



VGGO annually publishes a book to promote its members' activities and highlight the skills of graphic artists in general. This particular edition was about the technique of Dutch book illustration in the nineteenth century. For optimal presentation of the various techniques, UNA used foldouts, inserts, and die cuts, as well as a wide range of paper stock. The text and images are placed on an intricate, six-column modular grid with ten modules vertically. Each module is divided in half vertically, and all text baselines, from the top of the page, are available as hanglines should the need arise.

— This grid is designed to accommodate numerous, unusual nonstandard illustration formats, which are presented wherever they fit, so long as they align with the grid; they're permitted to float behind or interfere with the regular double-column of running text, and often straddle the gutter.

— The home starting point for captions is a secondary outer margin that is mirrored from left to right pages. The smaller type size and column width for the captions correspond to the single-width column defined by the module.

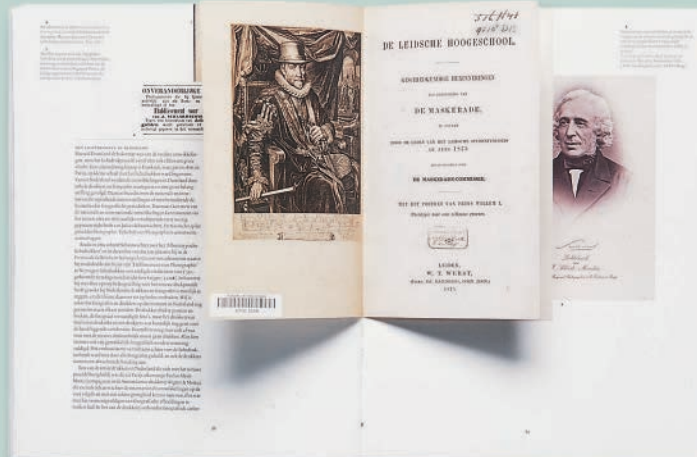
— Inserts of varying sizes and paper stocks are tipped in and do not necessarily adhere to the grid. This unexpected violation is sometimes applied to the illustrations that are actually printed on the main text page. The interaction between these trompe-l'oeil images and the three-dimensional pop-ups creates a rich dimensionality.



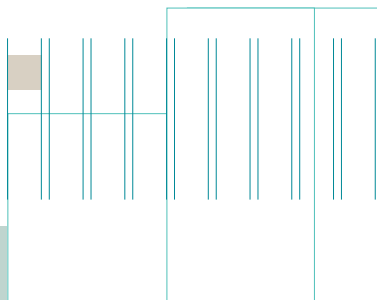
Una [Amsterdam] Designers  
Amsterdam | Netherlands

Promotional book for the  
Dutch Royal Foundation of  
Graphic Enterprises [KVVG]

04 05 09 12 17 18 20  
22 23 26 27 30 31 33  
35  
05 06 07 11 14 16 18  
19 25



## Column Grid / Module+Format Dependent



### DESIGN

**Paone Design Associates**  
Philadelphia, PA | USA

**Identity and stationery  
system for DZ Group, an  
apparel manufacturer**

### EXHIBIT COMPARISONS

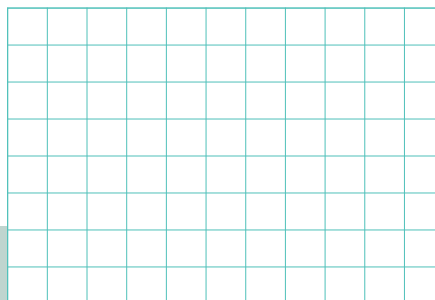
01 03 06 10 11 13 15  
17 19 23 24 27 28 32  
34  
05 12 35

In this rigorously disciplined stationery system for a multinational apparel manufacturer, a column grid whose column-count and proportions are defined by a consistent module helps coordinate internal company communication documents across three continents. The module that orders the document structures is the company's logo itself, a red square. The logo/module's size remains the same in every instance, but the column structure it precipitates in each document's format is determined by how many modules of that size can be configured side-by-side within it, given its particular height and width. By setting up specific, related column structures in all of the printed materials, the modular grid helps order multiple addresses and complex forms for a coherent, recognizable brand image.





# Modular Grid / “Graph Paper” Variant



## DESIGN

**Poulin+Morris**  
New York, NY | USA

**Traveling exhibition for  
University of Rochester  
Medical Center**

## EXHIBIT COMPARISONS

01 03 06 11 13 15 17  
19 23 24 27 28 32 34  
03 05 07 09 12 25 28  
35

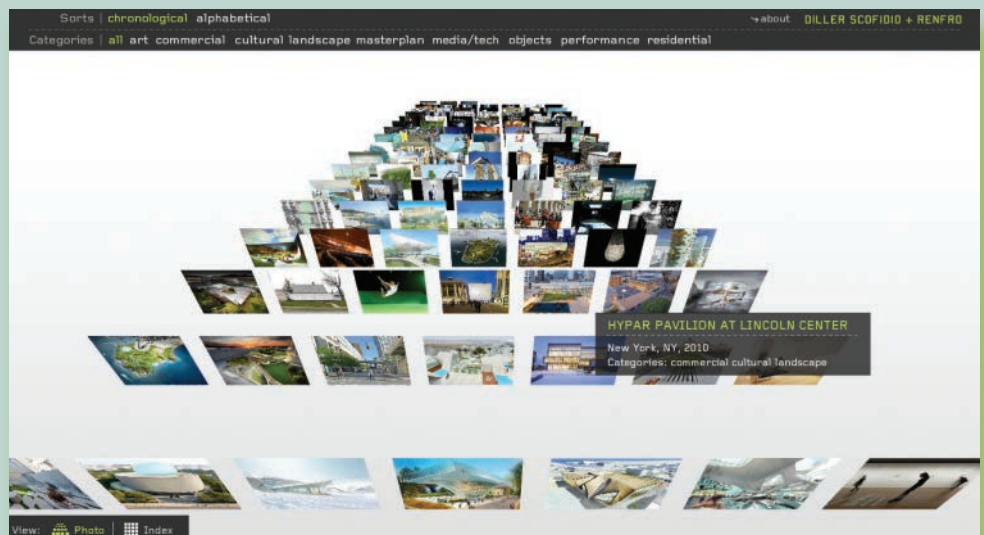
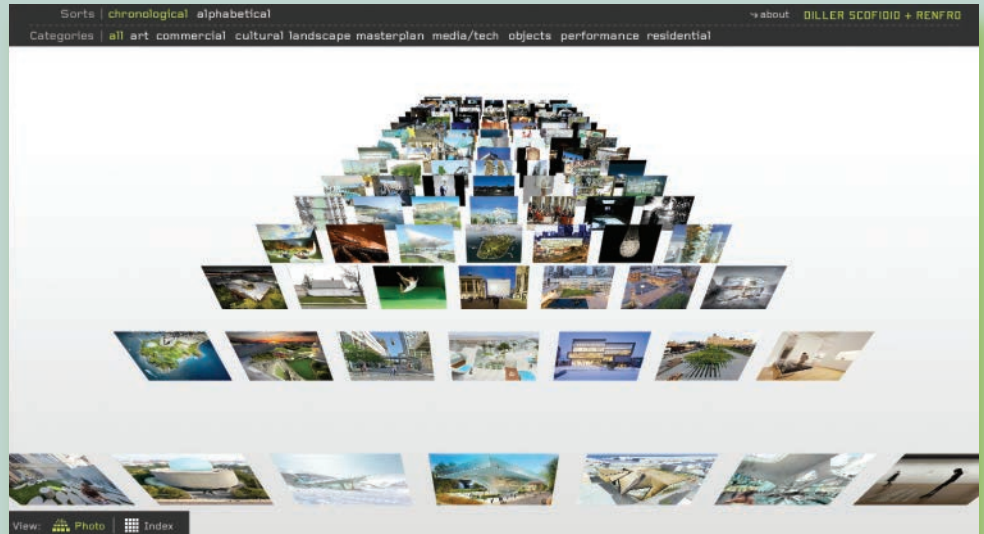
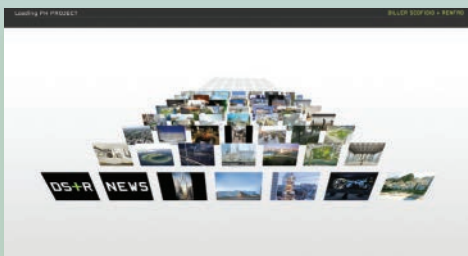
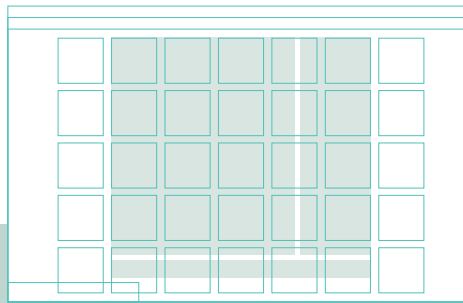


This simply constructed traveling exhibition about a Nobel Prize winner's life balances the studied rigor of a square-module grid with gracefully curved panels and details of bright color. The grid is an enlarged modular grid, without interstices between the modules. Text and images relating the story of Arthur Kornberg's life are arranged around the grid: interlocking, changing horizontal and vertical stress, moving over and under individual modules but always adhering to it.

\_\_\_ The modular grid, specifically, allows numerous shaped images to integrate seamlessly without having to resort to translucency or montage effects that might not reproduce well at exhibition-sized scale. Some elements are two modules high by three wide, whereas some are two modules square.

\_\_\_ Clever shifts in alignment and insets of flat color and type against textural backgrounds create a smooth, unbroken continuum of image and words from the beginning panel to the last.

## Compound Grid / Modular+Hierarchic



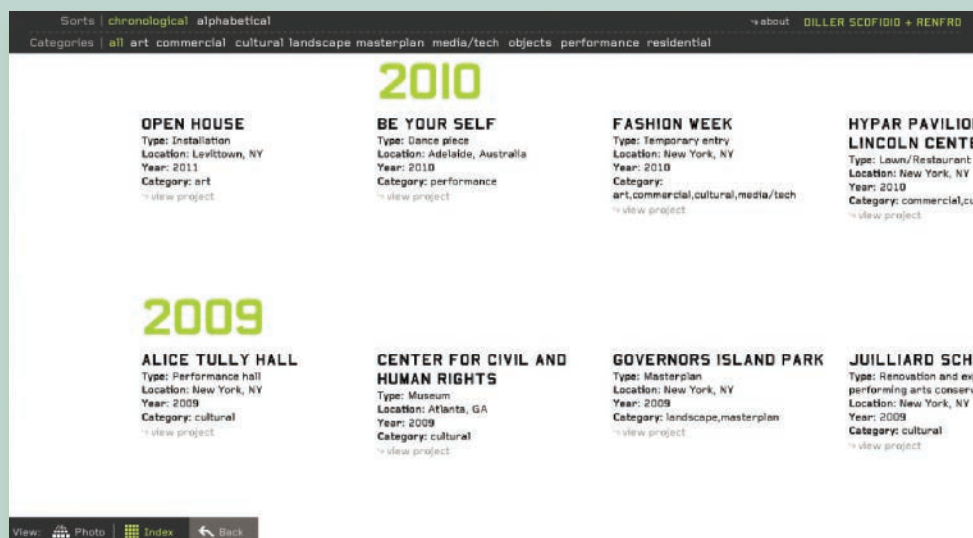
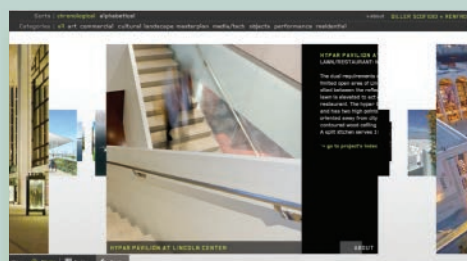
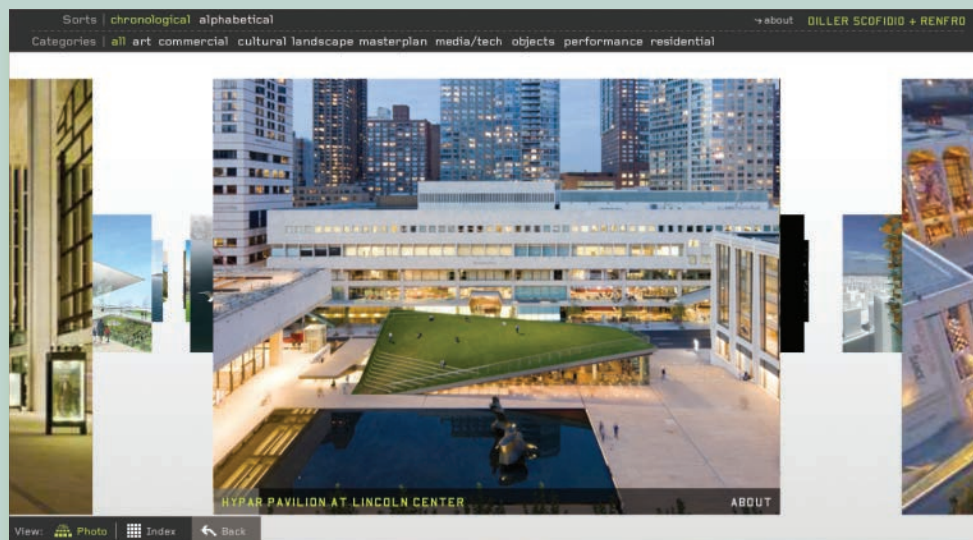
The modular grid that governs most of this architecture firm's website is expressed in 3D as rows of project images. Once the projects load into their modules sequentially (left), the user can see cursory information about each by hovering over it. Moving the cursor toward the top of the screen (or, toward the back rows of the arrangement) causes the rows to advance toward the user in space. Clicking on any project image within a row will "fly" the user down into the matrix of pictures and position them at "ground level" in front of it.

At this point, the user may choose to scroll information about the selected project within the inset image window—which is built on a hierarchic grid—or click on any of the images from rows that are further away in space; the interface will then zoom the user through the rows at warp speed to confront the newly selected project image.



Lisa Strausfeld [produced  
while at Pentagram/NY]  
Portland, OR | USA  
Website for architecture  
firm Diller Scofidio + Renfro

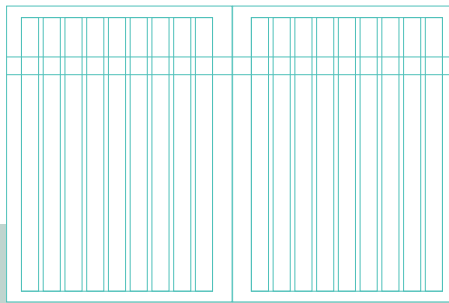
03 06 07 10 21 23 24  
25 32  
02 05 09 13 14 17 20  
32



Users may toggle between the picture-grid view and a typographic index, articulated on the same modular grid; the indexical entries are situated in the same modules as are their pictorial counterparts.

— The user may zoom out, reducing the scale of the grid so that they may peruse projects chronologically, and then zoom in to see specific project listings related to a particular year of interest. Clicking on the navigation toggle at lower right reorients the user in the pictorial grid, at the same relative location within the grid as the text entry.

# Column Grid



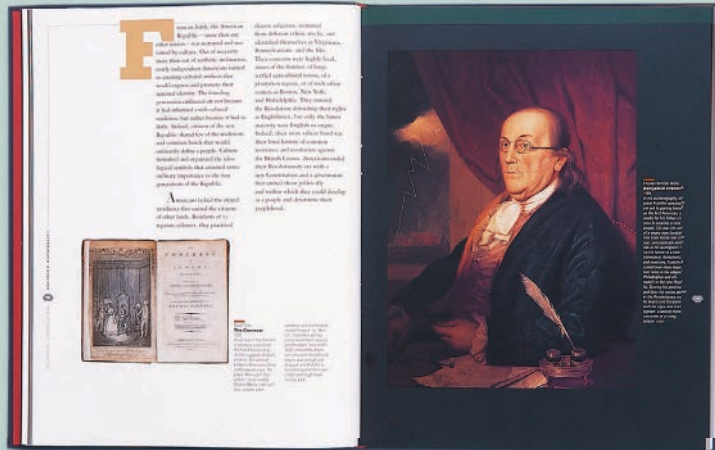
## DESIGN

**Katz Wheeler**  
Philadelphia, PA | USA

*Cultural Connections, a history book published by Temple University Press*

## EXHIBIT COMPARISONS

02 04 05 08 14 17 18  
20 22 26 27 29 30 33  
35  
07 14 16 17 18 19 24  
27 34



A nine-column grid supplied the variety needed to encompass an enormous selection of artifacts, descriptions, and listings for this hardcover book on the museums and libraries of Philadelphia and the Delaware Valley.

For essays and their supporting images in the book's first section, the nine columns are used as three. Running text hangs from a single flowline near the top of the page, starting and ending with a complete paragraph. Each spread is informationally independent: only images referred to in the text on that spread are shown. The tremendous flexibility inherent in the column grid allows the designers to vary the layouts to accom-

modate unusually shaped artifacts, but the hangline and natural ending depths of the text give a unified quality to the information. Captions occupy a narrow width defined by that of two base columns and can be placed in close proximity to the image they notate; the precision of the nine-column grid ensures they always align with it, regardless of where they must be placed.

In the listing of institutions that makes up the book's second major section, this text structure is even more useful; each institution's listing, no matter how involved, is available at a glance. Captions in this section remain the same as before, but the text

width is narrowed to occupy the width of three base columns. Each width is suited to the respective type size and function of the information.



## Row-Structured Hierarchic Grid



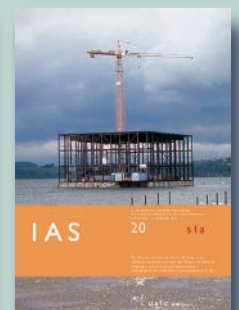
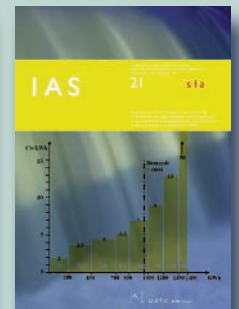
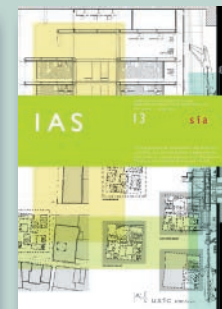
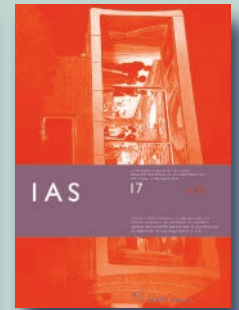
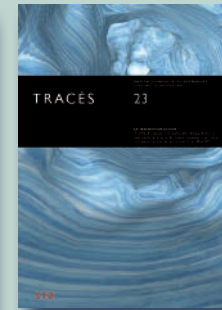
### DESIGN

**Atelier Poisson**  
Lausanne | Switzerland

**Cover system for an  
interior design and archi-  
tecture trade magazine**

### EXHIBIT COMPARISONS

**02 06 09 16 19 20 30**  
**31**  
**05 14 21**



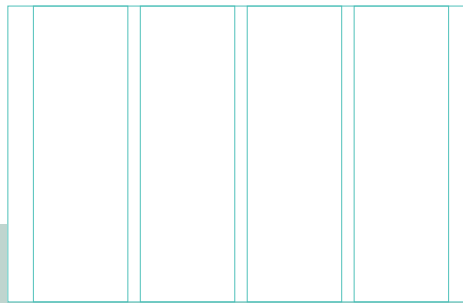
The image material provided for consideration in designing this trade magazine's covers was of low quality; for budgetary reasons no new photography would be possible. As a solution, and to create distinction, the designer implemented a compositional system based on a colored band that holds the masthead, which is able to slide up and down on the cover in response to whatever image is available.

\_\_\_ The A4 format is divided first by a square of its width, based on the proportioning of the golden section in classical architecture. The masthead band is equal in height to one-third of that square. Within the band, the information—magazine name, volume number,

and contents—is distributed vertically along flowlines that divide the band into quarters and is broken by a vertical division that also corresponds to the golden section. The width of one-quarter of the band establishes the outer margins for typography.

\_\_\_ As the band is positioned during the design process, it reveals and obscures different aspects of the background photograph. It also divides the entire page in harmonious proportions relating to the golden section. The aggressively rigorous geometry of the layout system helps to mask the poor quality of the images and helps create consistency between editions.

## Column Grid



## DESIGN

Büro Uebele Visuelle  
Kommunikation  
Stuttgart | Germany

Website for the Bauhaus  
Museum in Weimar

## EXHIBIT COMPARISONS

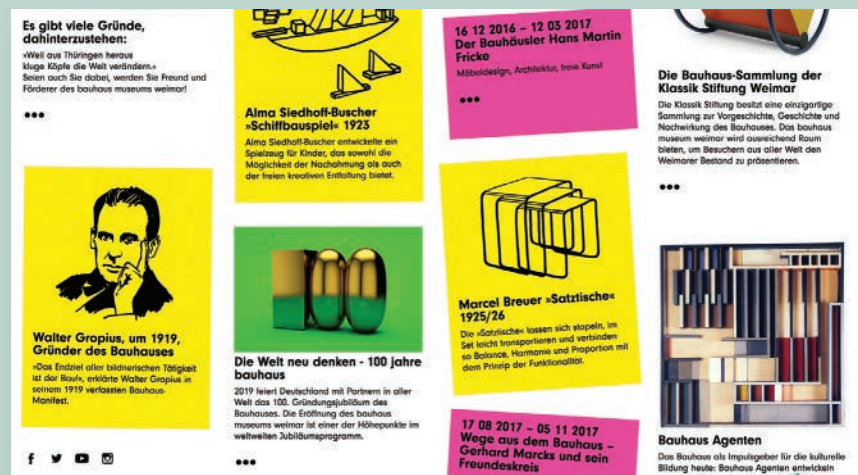
02 05 08 12 14 18  
22 26 29 30 31 33 34  
06 07 16 19 24



Upon landing, what initially appears to this site's visitors as an unconstructed collage of colored image fields resolves itself into a distinct 4-column grid as the page is scrolled from top to bottom. Once the structure comes to rest in its grid-formatted presentation, the designers retain a sense of the collage's liberty by gently rotating some elements within their respective columns.

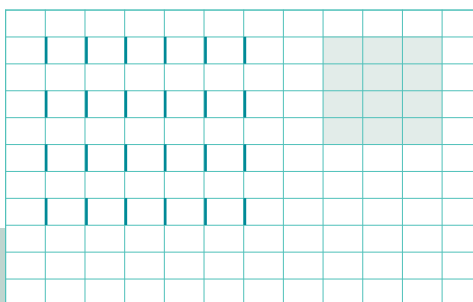
\_\_\_ No row structure is evident, nor are left-to-right horizontal alignments, as the depths of the individual text/image units vary, driven by the sizes of the images and the scope of the text that each contains.

Upon selecting an image/text unit—all of which are active links—users are taken to a page that provides information of greater depth and detail. In these pages, text spans the interior two columns, while images are aligned horizontally across all four, creating instances of row structure whenever the content dictates its use.





## Modular Grid



## DESIGN

**Vignelli Associates**  
New York, NY | USA

**Exhibition and showroom  
for furniture manufacturer  
Poltrona Frau**

## EXHIBIT COMPARISONS

01 03 06 07 09 10 11  
19 21 23 24 25 28 32  
05 28 35



For this trade exhibit of furniture produced by a venerable Italian manufacturer, the designer brings the organizational grid into physical existence. The subtle irony here is that while interior designers use a flat grid to plan a three-dimensional space, the grid is made three-dimensional, and the furniture's "real" presence in this exhibit is represented by a single, iconic chair, set apart from the remaining space on a glass platform exactly three grid-modules square.

— The rest of the furniture is displayed as flat photography organized in a three-dimensional plan. As a result, a great deal more furniture can be shown, and the exhibit has a much greater presence because of its unusual approach. Articulating the grid through the use of materials adds a tactile quality and a solidity that imparts a serene order to the space. The modules in the floor are stone blocks; the vertical displays, showcasing the photographs of furniture, are brushed steel planks that have been inserted between the floor blocks. A glass plane under the iconic chair and the floor blocks creates reflection, highlighting the chair's physicality and linking it to the remainder of the grid.

— Translucent scrims stretch from the floor in front of walls that have been airbrushed from lighter to darker, and then lit from below, giving the impression that the walls and vertical plinths are floating; despite its apparent rigidity, the grid assumes a light, ethereal quality.



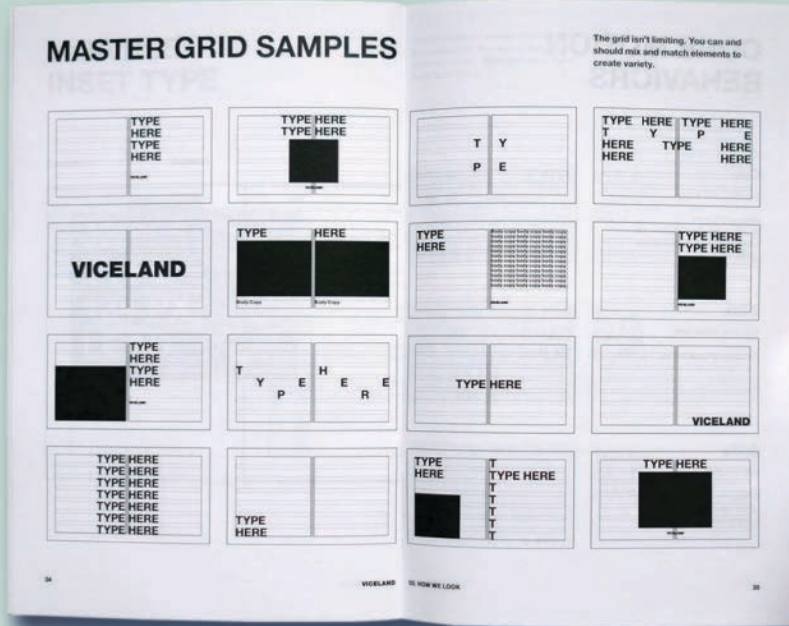
## Row Grid with Modular and Hierarchic Application

ABCDEFGHIJ

AaBbCcDdEeFf  
AaBbCcDdEeFf

VICELAND

ABCDEF



The visual identity established for this documentary and news channel strips the visual language down to a black-and-white typographic field, using one bold-weight sans serif font, set either all in caps (for titling) or sentence case (for continuous text). The grid is composed only of rows that are defined by the heights of the type, as determined by its hierarchic style—three sizes are permitted.

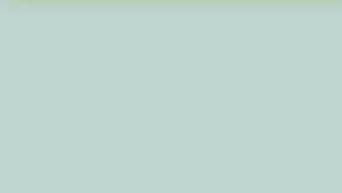
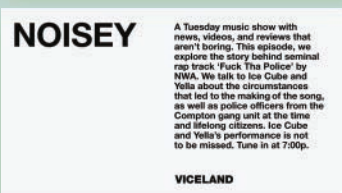
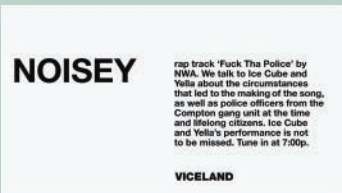
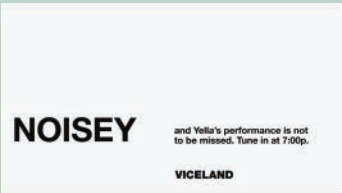
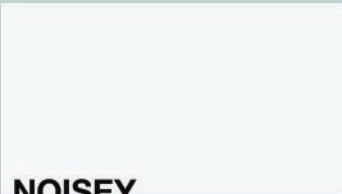
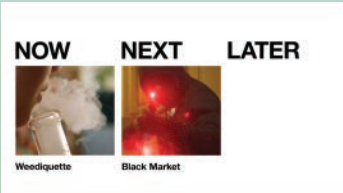
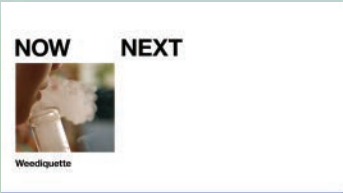
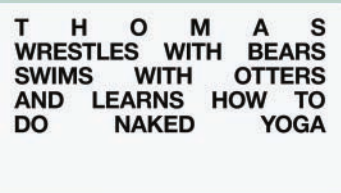
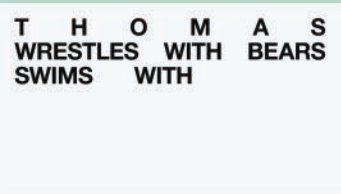
Within the rows, however, the text performs a number of manoeuvres, playing with repetition, default spacing intervals, alignment logic, and organization from left to right. In print, as for the poster snipe shown below, multiple iterations of the grid become evident. But the system takes on new life when applied to interstitial video segments that advertise the programming schedule and appear between programs themselves.

Letters and words are permitted to jump from row to row, to scroll upward or downward at different rates, or to subdivide the screen into columns for detailed information.

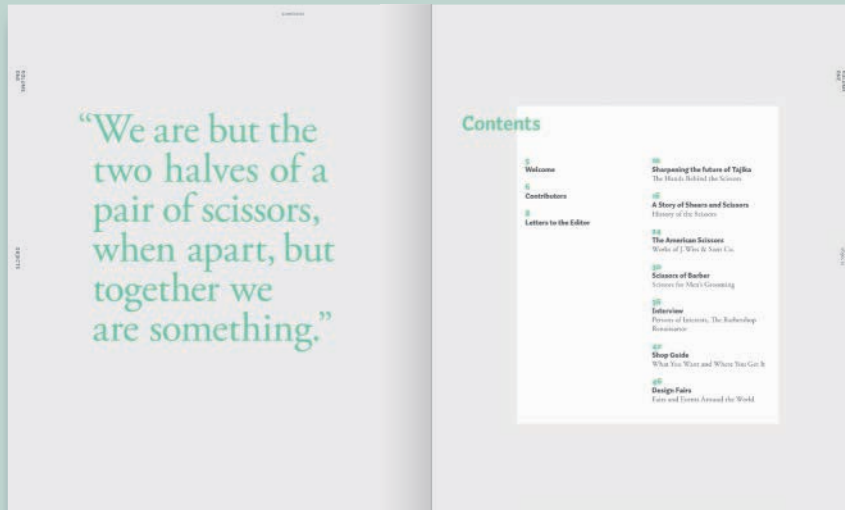
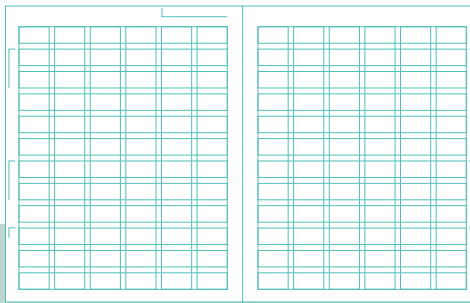
The system's heavy-handed grid application imparts a wry, but unpretentious quality to the brand that the designers describe as "premium default."







## Modular Grid



A 6 x 12 modular grid—six columns, twelve rows—elegantly orchestrates crisp images and typographic layouts for this magazine that fetishizes a single tool in each issue.

\_\_\_ The transition from exterior cover, through front matter, to the opening of the first article focuses on the articulation of a central frame—defined by the grid's central four columns and eight rows—to highlight the precious character of the tool by creating a kind of shadow-box in which to present it. The box changes in color and solidity from spread to spread, eventually changing from planar to linear, and easing the reader into a more fluid layout of extensive text and images that dance, slowly and in a stately, geometric manner, around the modules. Feature articles that follow the first begin with the linear frame (as seen in the spread at lower left); this progression is enforced issue after issue.

\_\_\_ Secondary sections assume an equally crafted presence, but one that is more conventionally editorial in feeling. Content is constrained to a spatial zone beginning five rows from the top, with upper-level hierarchic text (like section titles and decks), as well as introductory images, arranged above.

\_\_\_ Folios and a system of detailed runners exist in the head margin and in the foredge margins providing a highly crafted, precise sense of navigation and attention to the magazine as an object in its own right.

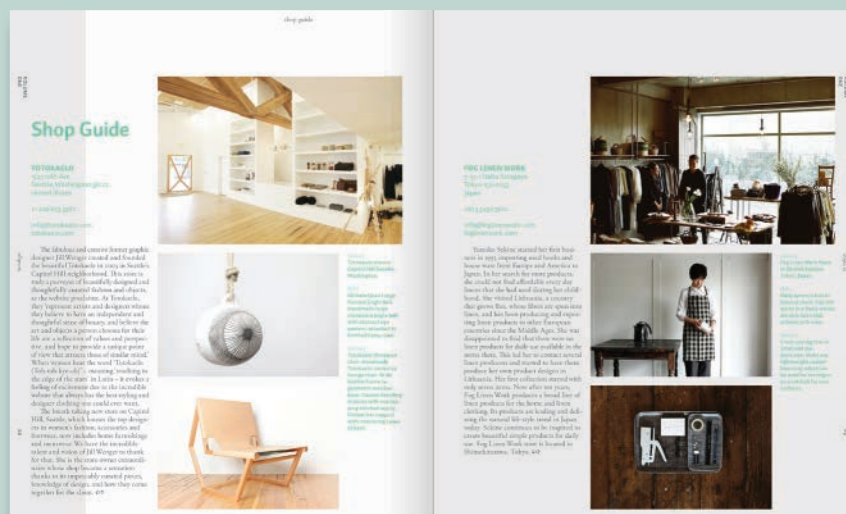
\_\_\_ A limited ink palette highlights the rich coloration of very specifically art-directed photographs and illustrative elements, using a light, warm gray as a backdrop and one relatively intense pastel for each issue. The paper stock, it turns out, is actually gray; white elements are printed in an opaque ink to call attention to the surface and, again, to the magazine as an object.

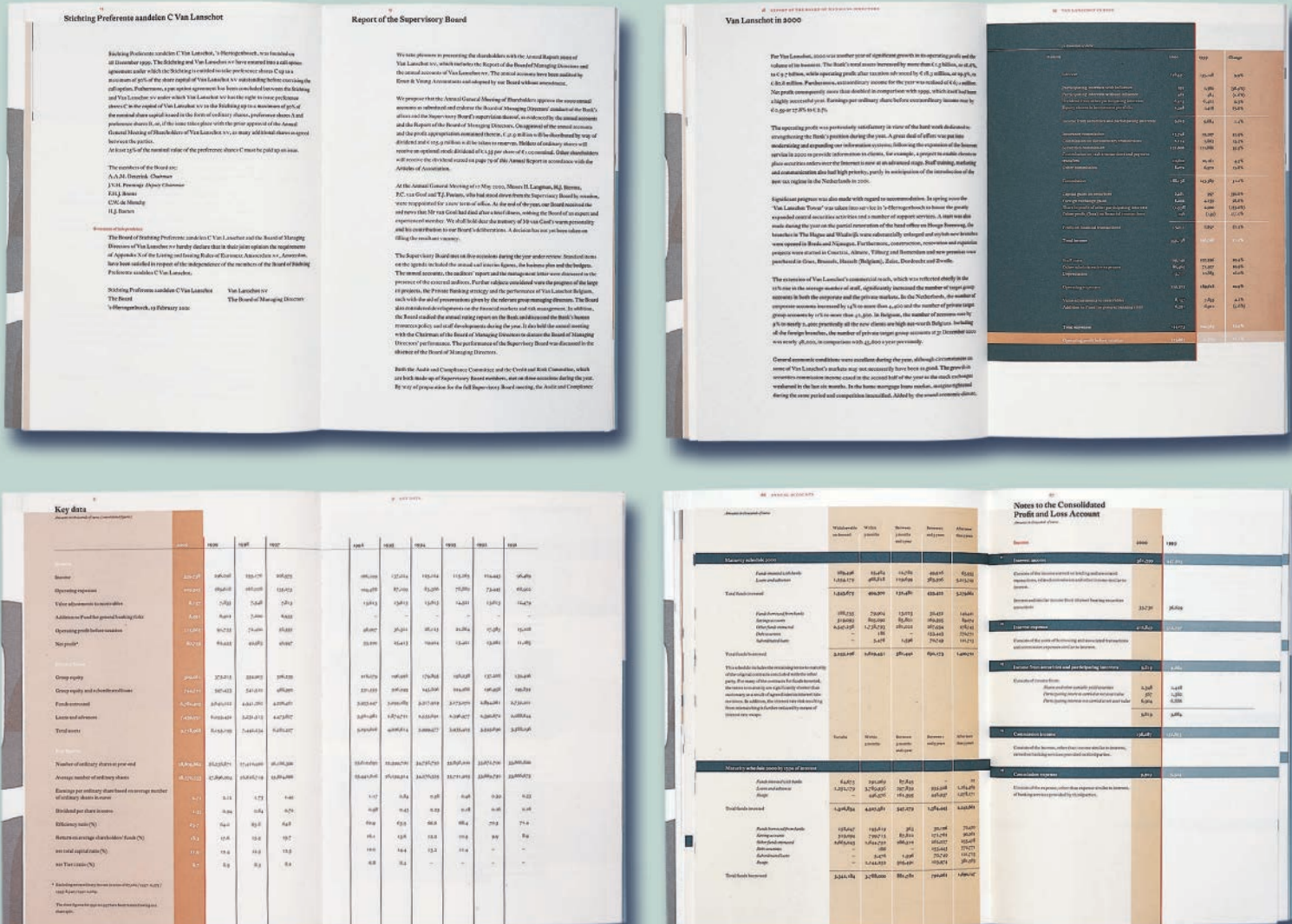
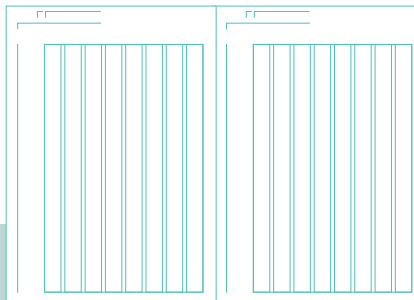


**Yoojung Kang**  
**Timothy Samara, Instructor**  
 New York, NY | USA

**Editorial structure for a publication devoted to tools and crafts**

02 04 08 10 12 20 23  
 24 26 27 29 30 33 35  
 07 14 25 34 35





This annual report for a private bank in the Netherlands is organized around an elegant column grid that seamlessly integrates running text, tables, and financial disclosures. The text block is divided into four primary columns of 40 mm each, and those again in half—the width of the longest numeric figure in any table. A set of alignments separated by 10 mm at the leading edge of the main text block provides a consistent edge for text and financials, and subheads or notations outdent slightly to align with the page number up top. The hangline for body text creates

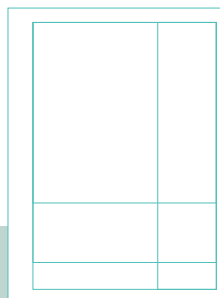
a space between the running title head that orients the tabular matter. Columns of numbers are differentiated by white space or background tints, with current figures given the most prominence.

— The hard cover is embossed with the bank's crest in a nod to its reserved interior, but is wrapped by a colorful, folded poster that displays the most relevant financial figures from the interior. It's an attractive departure from the stately interior, but the short-folded edge that reveals the bank's logotype echoes the text's hangline inside.





# Hierarchic Grid

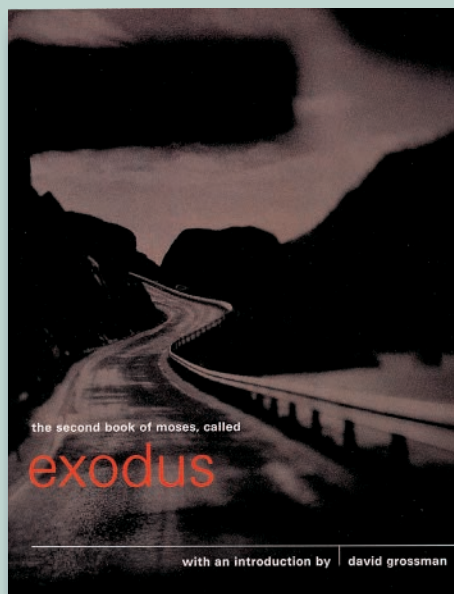
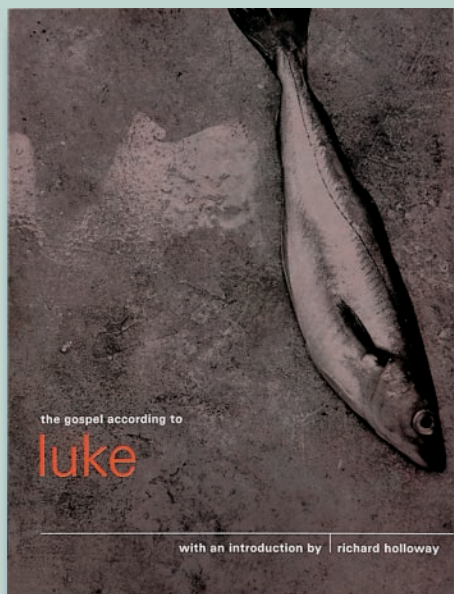


DESIGN

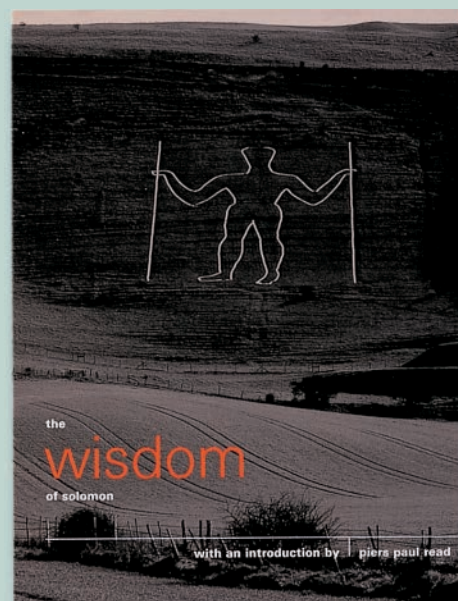
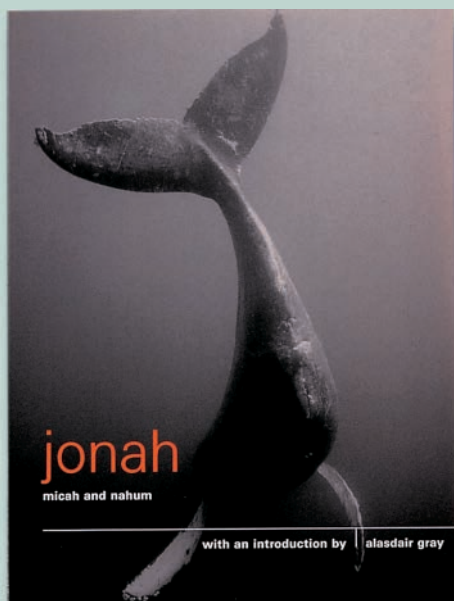
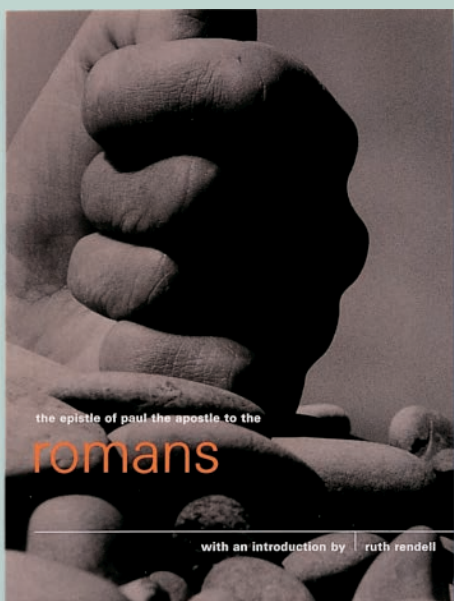
**Pentagram UK—**  
**Angus Hyland**  
 London, England | UK  
**Cover layout system for**  
**Canongate Books, Ltd.**

EXHIBIT COMPARISONS

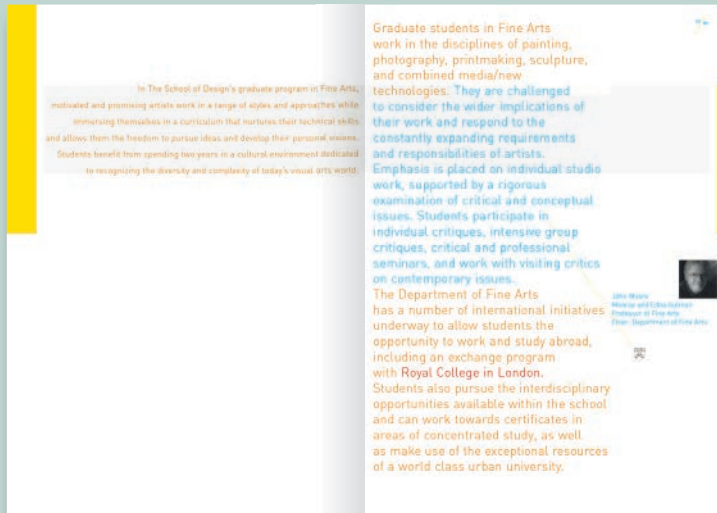
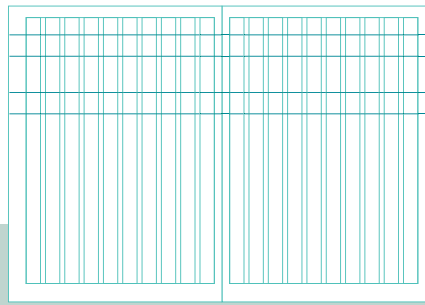
03 09 13 15 20 28 31  
 34  
 05 09 10 16 29 31



A grid-based set of proportions, mathematically derived from the width of these small-format Biblical extracts, provides a clean, simple structure for their titling. The depth of the first hangline, for the title itself, is the square of the book's width. The secondary information is given specific position, respective of its place in the hierarchy (subtitle, Biblical notation, author, translator). The use of a structural underline and linear-rule bracket for separation of elements in this area lends contrast to the mysterious photography, as well as a more modern sensibility.



## Column Grid with Hierarchic Zones



Ten columns structure the body of each page, which is separated from its partner in a spread by an exceptionally narrow gutter. The interior columns are generally free of material, used as added margin.

Four flowlines cut across the spread at different intervals from the page head to establish locations for content presented in a consistent configuration: a row of images, a row of course listings, a shallow row of secondary images, and the primary text, arranged across a variety of column widths below all. In some instances, no secondary images appear, so the designer raises the running text area to begin at their usual flowline and make use of the space that would otherwise have been forfeit.

Elements generally appear to adhere to the column alignments within their respective

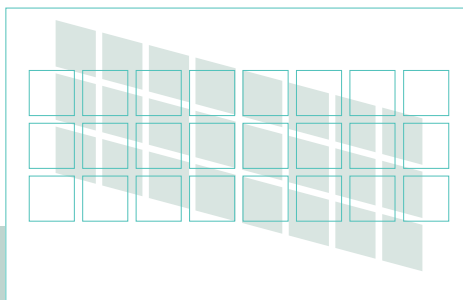




## MAKING AND BREAKING THE GRID



## Dimensional Modular Grid



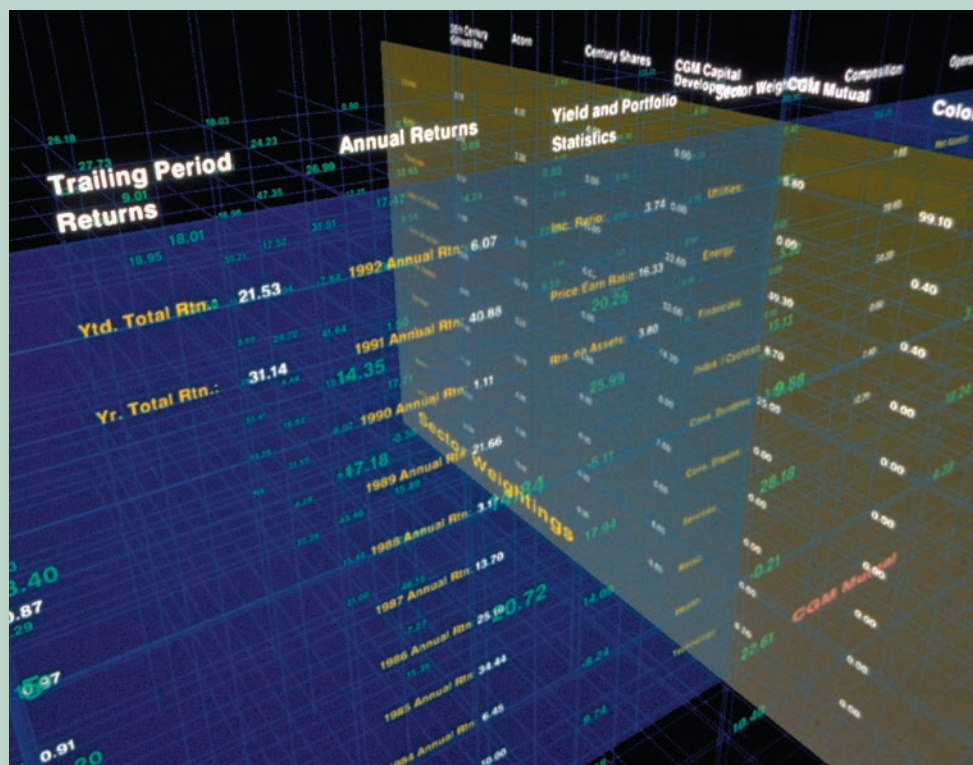
### DESIGN

MIT Media Lab/Visible  
Language Workshop—  
Muriel Cooper [CD] and  
David Small  
Cambridge, MA | USA

Dynamic text interface for  
TED Conferences LLC

### EXHIBIT COMPARISONS

01 03 10 11 15 17 20  
22 24 25 28 32 34  
01 02 04 05 09 15 17  
18 20 28 32 35

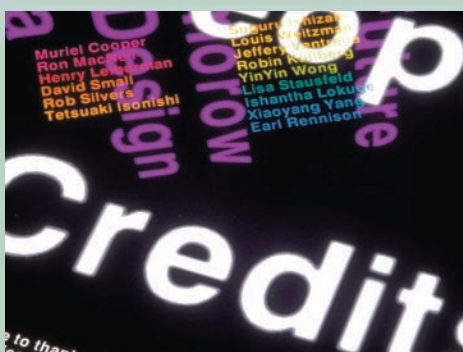
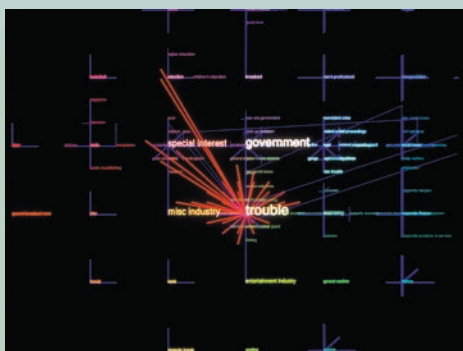


The premise of this pioneering digital interface, produced for a media and design conference, is to add dimension to text information for greater accessibility, as well as to facilitate the connection of related components using a spatial model. It was envisioned that the text would behave according to a standard typographic grid, but in three dimensions, so that multiple axes could work together to organize the text.

Several kinds of information are presented: a selection of news articles separated by subject; a complex set of financial data; a geographical map of the United States; and a virtual map of network users joined over the Internet. The maps are presented in a kind of space that references location and scale, but the texts are arranged on modular grids that permit the user to fly through the information intuitively, going from one subject to another, turning to an article in space to reveal links to related articles.

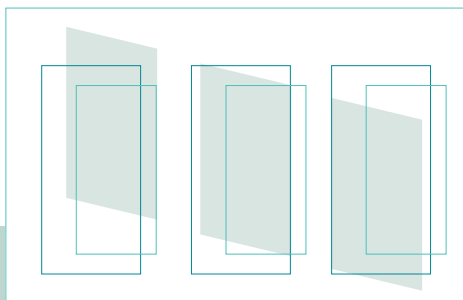
The user is able to sort the information contained in the database around the axes of the grid, depending on which path of inquiry he or she wants to follow: each axis shows one set of facts, sorted by specific criteria. The relationships between multiple fact sets are made visible and more immediately accessible through the design's movement; the user can see what information is connected through the grid lines and around corners.

The information's legibility changes depending on its orientation to the viewer. As the user navigates the grid, text that is running along another axis can be rotated into proper reading position; text objects in the distance change color and become more distinct as they come closer.





## Dimensional Column Grid



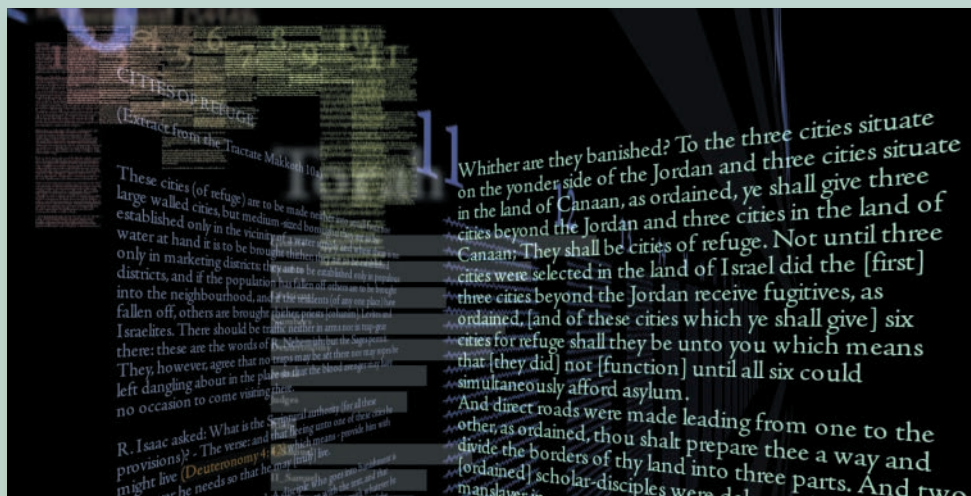
DESIGN

Small Design Firm, Inc.  
Cambridge, MA | USA

*The Talmud Project*, an  
interactive text interface  
for the MIT Media Lab

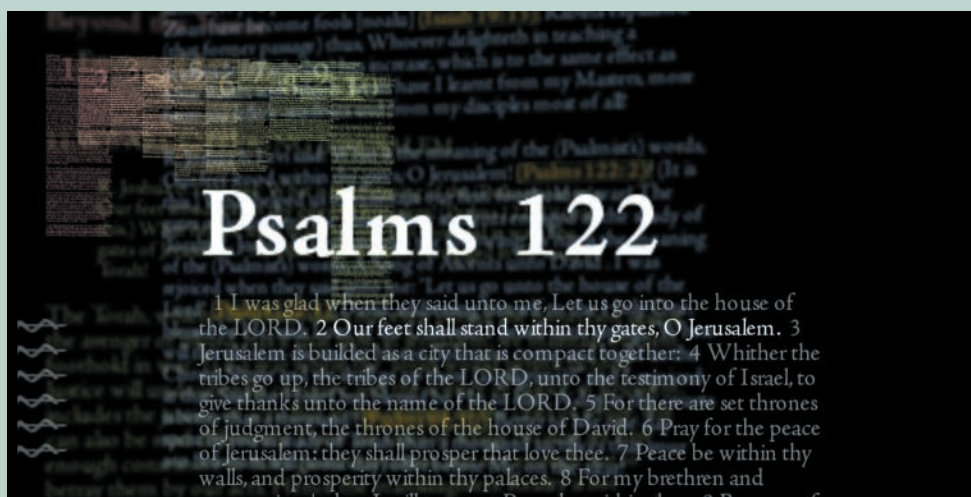
EXHIBIT COMPARISONS

02 04 05 08 11 12 14  
18 20 24 29 35  
01 02 07 14 15 16 17  
18 20 21 23 27 32 34

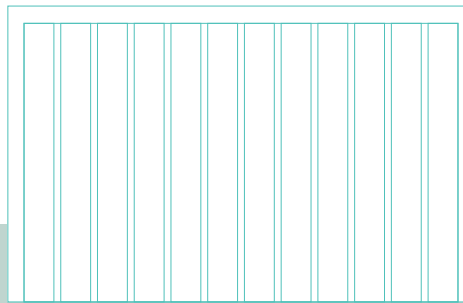


Relatively ordinary columns of serif type form the basis of this complex digital information system that combines passages of the Talmud and the Torah, translated into English and French. By turning dials located on the display monitor that correspond to different, but related, aspects of the texts, viewers are able to zoom in to specific passages and interactively cross-reference them with related texts in the database.

— The dials rotate the text columns in virtual space, with each axis around the column linking to other texts or to its translation in the other language. The distribution of the text across the columns changes depending on which dials are selected and, therefore, which aspect of the text is called into view. The grid in this information system allows thousands of pages to be interconnected and accessible within seconds.



## Column Grid / Half-Browser Module Formations



### DESIGN

**Piscatello Design Center**  
New York, NY | USA

**Website for architecture firm Kliment Halsband**

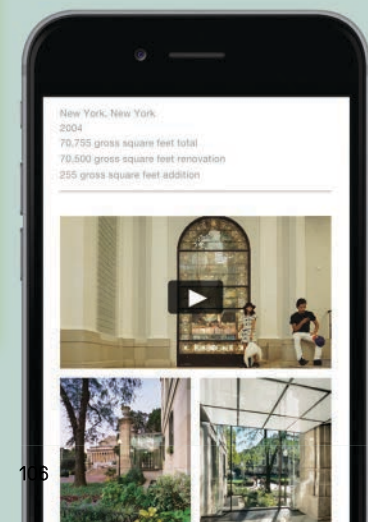
### EXHIBIT COMPARISONS

01 03 08 09 11 14 15  
17 20 24 26 29 30 31  
33 34  
05 09 35



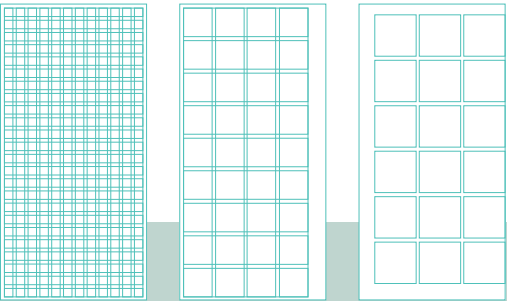
The 12-column grid used in this site's design is expressed as modular, in a square proportion based on the width of a combination of columns: content is proportioned, for example, by 3-column-wide modules on the landing page (shown four across) or 2-column-wide modules (shown six across) on the subpage. The symmetrical subdivision of the twelve base columns permits the modularity to remain consistent as the browser resizes, because both module proportions respond to the halving of the format, left-to-right (no matter how many modules appear, there are always 6 columns on either side of the central vertical axis). This halving continues into the smartphone format, where full-screen width and half-width square modules can exist together in the narrow screen.

Detailing in the design is spare and elegant. One column-depth of space separates headings from text, and acts as a division between screen areas via a line rule. Navigation is carefully arranged in a header and secondary bands of the same depth, with links positioned left to right to strike column alignments and maintain the grid's continuity even as the browser changes width. Inset images reveal a text description (and link) upon mouseover, situated in a dark, translucent band that is one column depth in height.





# Compound Grid / Modular



DESIGN  
**Willi Kunz Studio**  
 New York, NY | USA

Lecture poster for Columbia University School of Architecture and Urban Planning

EXHIBIT COMPARISONS  
 01 03 05 06 10 18 20  
 26 32 34 35  
 02 03 04 05 07 09 14  
 28 34 35

**Columbia Architecture Planning Preservation**

**Lectures**

6:30 pm  
Wood Auditorium  
Avery Hall

Doors open to the general public  
6:15 pm

**September**

**19 Hawkinson**

**Wednesday**

**October**

**03 Vidler**

**04**

**Wednesday**

**Thursday**

**10 Frampton**

**Wednesday**

**15 Kuma**

**Monday**

**17 Hadid**

**24 Maeda**

**31 Zaera-Polo. Moussavi**

**September**

Wednesday, September 19  
**Laurie Hawkinson**  
 Associate Professor of Architecture  
 Columbia University  
 Architect, New York  
*Taking it Public: Thresholds, Doublings and Inversions*

October

Wednesday, October 3  
**Anthony Vidler**  
 Historian/Theorist  
*Theory and Design in the Post-Digital Age*

October 3  
 Histories of the Immediate Future

October 4  
 Theorizing Digital Aesthetics

Wednesday, October 10  
**Kenneth Frampton**  
 Ware Professor of Architecture,  
 Columbia University  
*The Catalytic City*

Monday, October 15  
**Kengo Kuma**  
 Architect, Japan  
*Architecture as Anti-Object  
 The Work of Kengo Kuma*

Wednesday, October 17  
**Zaha Hadid**  
 Architect, Great Britain  
*Recent Work*

Wednesday, October 24  
**John Maeda**  
 Associate Director,  
 MIT Media Laboratory,  
 Sony Career Development  
 Professor of Arts and  
 Sciences, Associate Professor  
 of Design and Computation  
*Post Digital*

Wednesday, October 31  
**Alexandro Zaera-Polo**  
**Fahid Moussavi**  
 Architects, London and Tokyo  
*Recent Work*

**November**

Wednesday, November 7  
**James Stewart Polshek**  
 Architect, New York  
 Former Dean, Columbia University  
*The History of the Future:  
 Connections and Transformations*

Wednesday, November 14  
**T. J. Jackson Lears**  
 Professor of History,  
 Rutgers University  
*The Aesthetic of Accident*

Buell Evening Lecture sponsored by  
 Skidmore, Owings & Merrill

**Exhibitions**

Fall 2001

September 10 –  
 October 19  
**Hedra Cerdà (1915-1976):  
 The Visionary Urban Planner**  
 100 Avery Hall

September 10 –  
 October 10  
**Kenzo Izo:**  
 Light Over Ancient Angkor  
 200 and 400 Avery Hall

September 17 –  
 October 22  
**Notes on Almost Nothing:  
 Mies van der Rohe's Haus Lange  
 and Haus Esters**  
 Curated by Kent Kleinman and  
 Leslie Van Duzer  
 Arthur Ross Gallery, Buell Hall

October 22 –  
 December 14  
**Sendai Mediatheque:  
 A Project by Toyo Ito**  
 Photography by Naoya Hatakeyama  
 100 Avery Hall

October 28 –  
 December 14  
**Nightscares and Glass Buildings:  
 Photography by Eriq Saldaña**  
 400 Avery

**November**

**07 Polshek**

**14 Lears**

**Wednesday**

**31**

**Wednesday**

**September**

Wednesday, September 19  
**Laurie Hawkinson**  
 Associate Professor of Architecture  
 Columbia University  
 Architect, New York  
*Taking it Public: Thresholds,  
 Doublings and Inversions*

**October**

Wednesday, October 3  
 Thursday, October 4

Monday, October  
**Kengo Kuma**  
 Architect, Japan  
*Architecture as A  
 The Work of Keng*

Wednesday, Octo  
**Zaha Hadid**  
 Architect, Great B

*Recent Work*

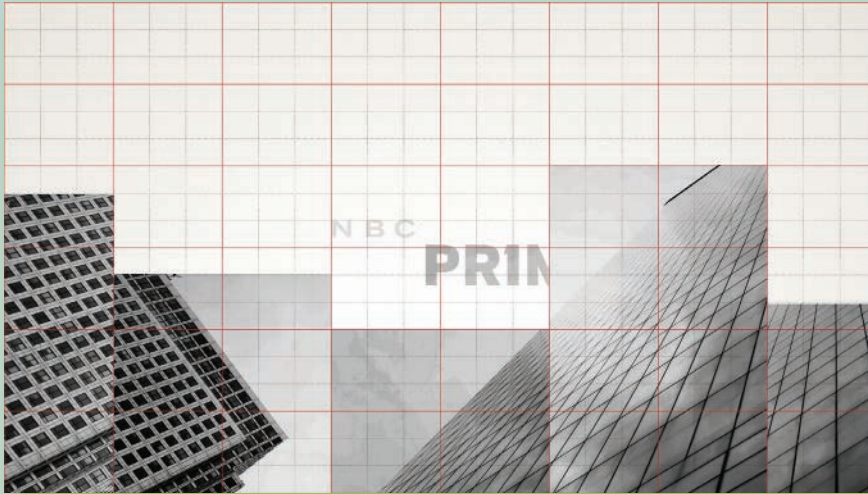
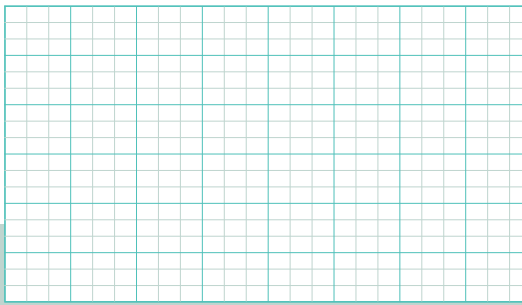
Wednesday, Octo  
**John Maeda**

The overlap of three modular grids—all using square modules but of vastly different scale—creates a shifting, ambiguous space as information that aligns to one grid confronts information that aligns to another. Parts of each grid are allowed to have common functions or alignment—for instance, the large-scale grid that contains the primary lecture information also makes use of the small-scale grid that orders the narrow columns up top; information in the wider columns of text below incorporate the alignments of the middle- and small-scale grids to create new widths not available in either grid.

Each of the grids is also articulated literally in various locations, their modules outlined by thin rules, and gutters filled as opaque white structures. These graphical treatments don't strictly adhere to one grid or another, moving freely between them and interacting with typographic elements in different ways at the designer's discretion.

# 25

## Modular Grid / “Graph Paper” Variant



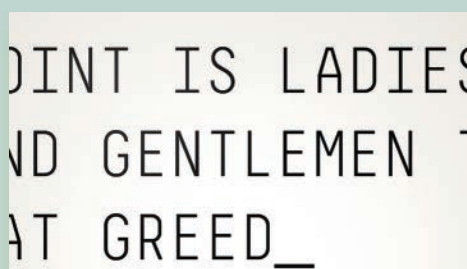
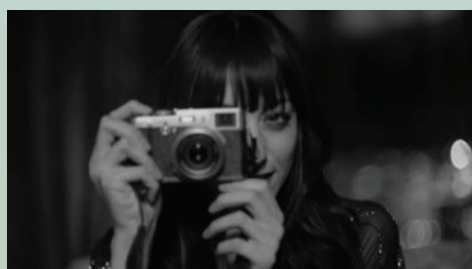
Rich black and white video and sleek typographic gestures slice and slide their way across the screen in branded motion spots for a financial infotainment channel. A modular grid, made up of eight primary columns and five primary rows, guides the action of image strips and planes of type as they move into and out of the frame. The module is horizontal in proportion, and further subdivided into 9 smaller units of the same aspect ratio.

\_\_\_ Video moves through the frame in a number of ways, typically beginning as independent strips and merging into larger planes; the strips may move into or out of the frame from top to bottom or left to right, but only in one direction at a time. The strips may be wide or narrow, depending on what combination of modules and internal units they use. Divisions between important elements, especially in a title frame, typically relate to the axes of the larger, primary modules.

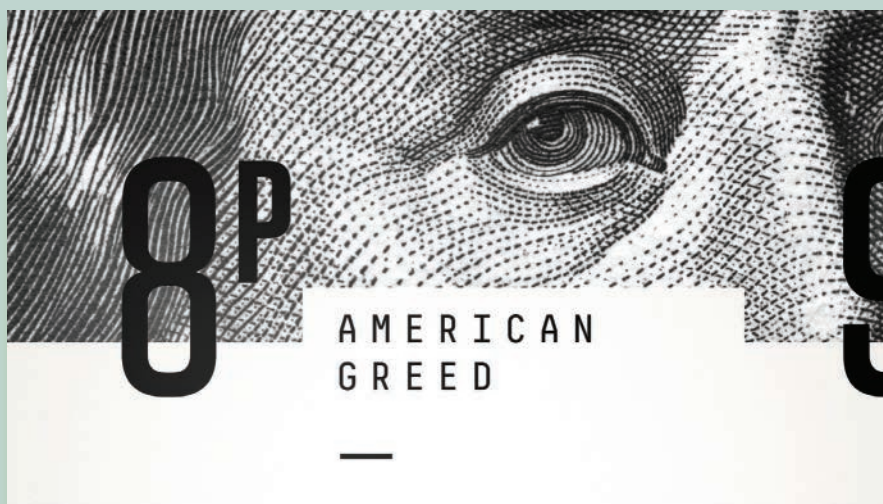
\_\_\_ Whatever direction video strips are moving, typographic elements—either independently “floating” text, or text within white planes—act as a foil by cross-cutting that movement or wiping into the video area, stopping to carve out angular overlaps of negative space from the image field. Every now and then, video strips move out from within the frame to reveal text elements.

\_\_\_ Typographic planes make use of both primary module and submodule axes; the planes themselves respecting the former, and text respecting both.

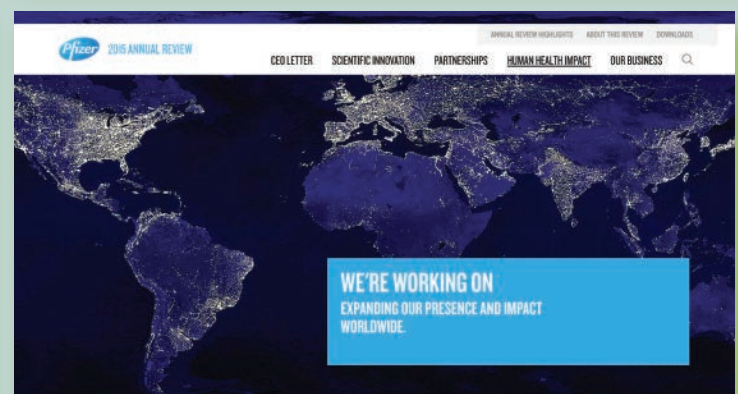
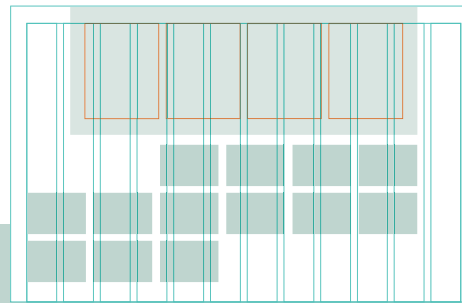




For the most part, the typography consists of program title and show time, but as part of the brand language, video is sometimes intercut with promotional copy that animates by appearing to key in behind a cursor. Text is chic and strong, set in a condensed, mono-spaced sans serif that accentuates the grid's intervals. A contrasting sans serif appears for secondary elements.



## Compound Grid / Column + Modular



## ADVANCES IN ONCOLOGY

We understand the urgency that cancer patients face. Our scientists are hard at work seeking to turn promising research into important medicines and making strides in innovative fields such as immuno-oncology as we build a pipeline of potential next-generation therapies so people with cancer may live longer, fuller lives.

### IBRANCE® REACHES PATIENTS

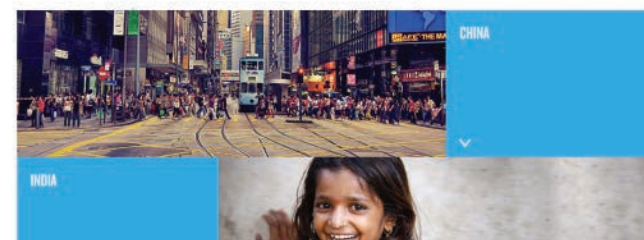
We continue to invest in research at the forefront of developing new treatment options for people living with breast cancer. In early 2015, we received U.S. Food and Drug Administration accelerated approval for Ibrance® (palbocicli), in combination with letrozole, for the treatment of post-menopausal women with estrogen receptor-positive, human epidermal growth factor receptor 2-negative (ER+/HER2-) advanced breast cancer as initial endocrine-based therapy for their metastatic disease.

Ibrance has been approved in several other countries around the world based on results from the Phase 2 PALOMA-1 clinical trial. Results from the first Ibrance Phase 3 trial, PALOMA-3, were reported in 2015 and additional Phase 3 studies are ongoing. We filed a

**20,000**  
IN THE FIRST 10 MONTHS FOLLOWING  
U.S. APPROVAL, IBRANCE REACHED

## GLOBAL REACH

Everywhere we work and live, Pfizer is a vital force for improving people's lives through the business of life science — fostering human health and well-being in multi-faceted countries and unique markets around the world.





**Ideas On Purpose**  
New York, NY | USA

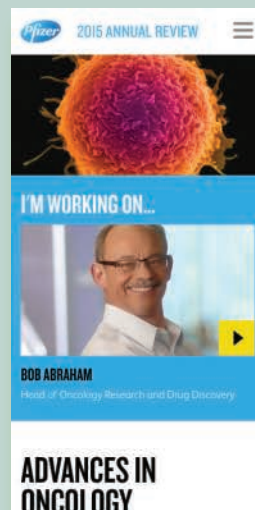
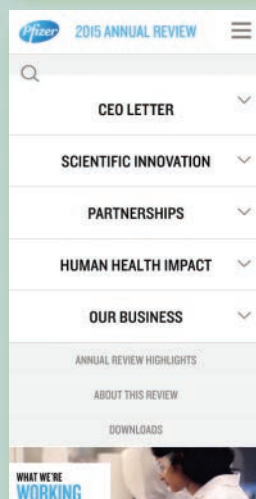
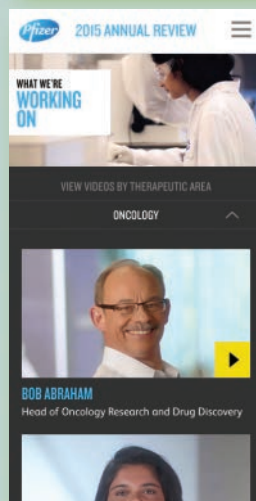
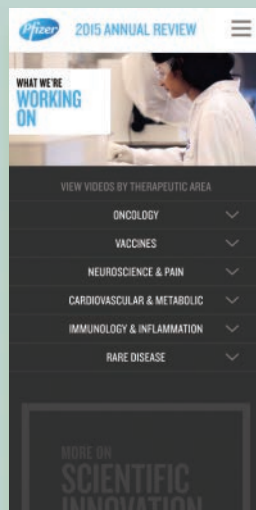
**Online annual report for a pharmaceutical company**

01 02 12 14 20 23 28  
30 33 34  
21 34 35

Multiple grid structures interact in this online annual report. At desktop or tablet sizing, the content area, which falls below an image that bleeds the screen left and right, uses a 12-column grid. Global navigation is located in a narrow header; the dropdown menu that appears on mouseover is structured on four columns whose widths and alignments are independent of those in the content area. A third grid structure, independent of both navigation and content area, orders a grouping of video thumbnails. This configuration appears only on the landing page (opposite page, top) and the proportions derive from those of the video format.

\_\_\_\_ Within the content area, the 12-column grid is articulated as a 3-column structure that is used in two different ways. For most of the scientific and business-oriented pages (represented by the “Advances in Oncology” layout, opposite), the three columns are used in what is called a 2/1 formation: two columns for a wide text block and one for images, callouts, sidebars, and so on. For message-oriented pages (such as “Global Reach”), the “2/1” formation is retained, but instead of a wide column of text and a narrow one of support material, the two zones combine as a horizontal band, with the 2-column area presenting an image that relates to a heading in the colored column adjacent. Each band is part of an accordion structure that expands downward to reveal text content.

\_\_\_\_ When the site collapses to smartphone format, material reorders to scroll sequentially from top to bottom; callouts or elements in the 2/1 configuration, for example, all narrow to a single column width and rearrange as embedded callouts that fall in line with text. Navigation also acts as an accordion, with each level expanding and contracting on tap or swipe. The global site navigation pushes the content downward when it expands, instead of covering it.



**ADVANCES IN ONCOLOGY**

We understand the urgency that cancer patients face. Our scientists are hard at work seeking to turn promising research into important medicines and making strides in innovative fields such as immunoncology as we build a pipeline of potential next-generation therapies so people with cancer may live longer, fuller lives.

### IBRANCE<sup>®</sup> REACHES PATIENTS

We continue to invest in research at the forefront of developing new treatment options for people living with breast cancer. In early 2015, we received U.S. Food and Drug Administration accelerated approval for Ibrance<sup>®</sup> (palbociclib), in combination with letrozole, for the treatment of postmenopausal women with estrogen receptor-positive, human epidermal growth factor receptor 2-negative (ER+/HER2-) advanced breast cancer as initial endocrine-based therapy for their metastatic disease.

Ibrance has been approved in several other countries around the world based on results from the Phase 2 PALOMA-1 clinical trial. Results from the first Ibrance Phase 3 trial, PALOMA-A3, were reported in 2015 and additional Phase 3 studies are ongoing. We filed a marketing application in Europe in mid-2015, and we have also initiated plans for additional global submissions in order to bring this innovative medicine to patients worldwide.

**20,000**

IN THE FIRST 10 MONTHS FOLLOWING U.S. APPROVAL, IBRANCE REACHED 20,000 PATIENTS.

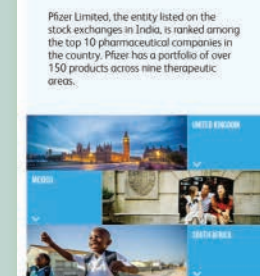
### Seeking Additional Indications

In addition to demonstrating efficacy in treating a relatively common type of metastatic breast cancer (ER+/HER2-), palbociclib is being tested in numerous clinical trials in other subsets of breast cancer and in other cancers such as head and neck.

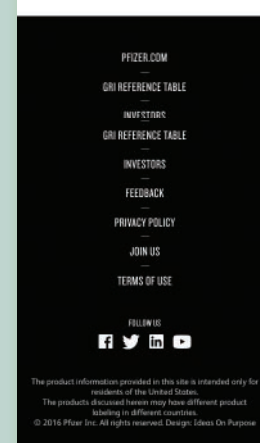


**GLOBAL REACH**

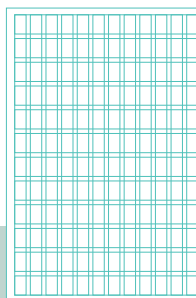
Everywhere we work and live, Pfizer is a vital force for improving people's lives through the business of life science — fostering human health and well-being in multi-faceted countries and unique markets around the world.



**BACK TO TOP**



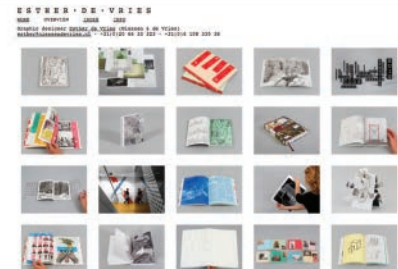
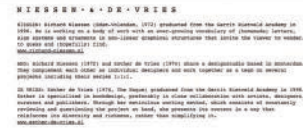
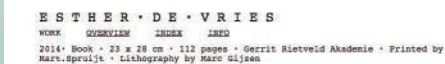
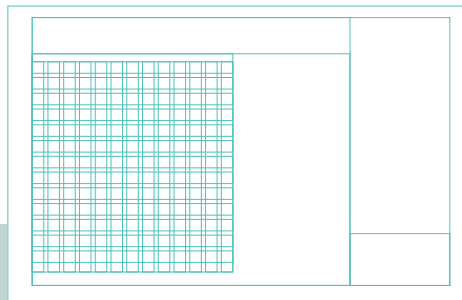




Although this poster's layout is dominated by image elements of radically different shapes, a 10 x 12 modular grid helps integrate detailed typography and bring the images into dialogue with it.

\_\_\_\_ The module's width is visibly defined by the width of the narrow text columns to the right of the vertical brush image. Its depth is more difficult to determine. Comparing the depth of the type element at upper left to that of the carved figures at lower left reveals they're about the same (this is an important clue). Repeating that interval between these two locations suggests that there are six rows, top to bottom. Within the text type, however, there appear smaller divisions that suggest a greater number of shallower rows. The last clue is in the dark area of the ornamental wrapping at the top of the brush—its depth divides the deep row in half (the white area above corresponds to the margin measure).

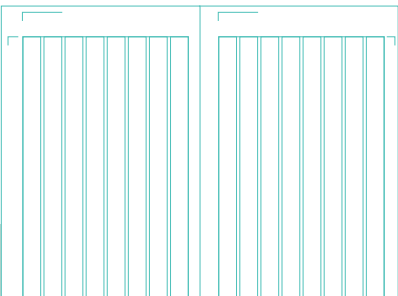
\_\_\_\_ Detailed alignment and proportion relationships between image and type elements lead to the grid, and then, in reverse, the grid leads to decisions about alignments and proportions. The size and position of the brush, in particular, is determined by the depths of the rows; each division within the brush corresponds to a row increment. The deepest column of text restates the brush's vertical, linear gesture, as do the vertical rules and rotated text in the upper left corner. The carved figures anchor the lower left corner of the format with a repeat of the column width. Amid all of this orthogonal logic, the arc of the large fan image and the red, calligraphic device add curvilinear contrast.



Clicking on each loads a new image of the project and an accompanying text. The heading and navigation material at the top of the page, the image frame, and the text area at lower right are templated in a hierarchic grid.



# Column Grid



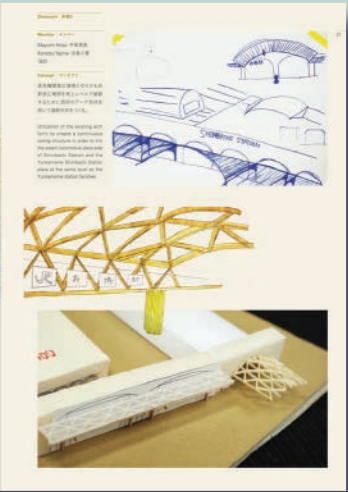
In this publication, eight columns that are separated by relatively tight gutters provide a tersely compact quality to the layouts. At a quick glance, the structure appears modular because of the prevalence of small inset images; in fact, there is no row structure—comparing the gutters between images that are positioned above and below each other, in different locations, reveals dissimilarities in their measures and lack of horizontal alignment. Instead, the designer is considering groups of related images as units, and positioning them to achieve the vertical rhythm of proportions and divisions from page to page that will best offset the text structure's stable consistency.

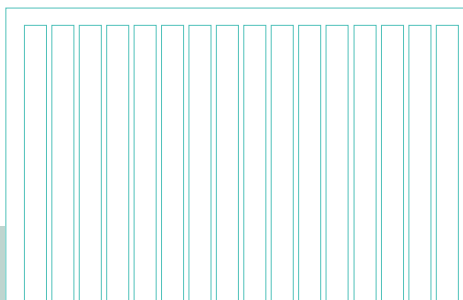
— The text—aside from some variation in the publication's front matter—conforms to a strict logic in which the first two of the eight columns contains headings and notations, and the running text follows in two columns that are each three columns wide. A system of thin rules breaks the information within the narrow column; they appear within running text only occasionally.

— Despite the text's consistency of presentation, the layouts seem remarkably varied because different combinations of image proportions are organized across the structure in different ways on each spread. Sometimes, images overlap each other in subtle ways, still adhering to the column alignments but introducing a new kind of dimensionality as a result (see the images on the spread directly to the left, for example).

— The cover design (opposite) uses a modular grid that is unrelated to the internal layout structure, chosen because it is iconically “a grid,” made of square modules. Printing and varnish techniques render some of the surface matte and other parts—within the modules—somewhat reflective.





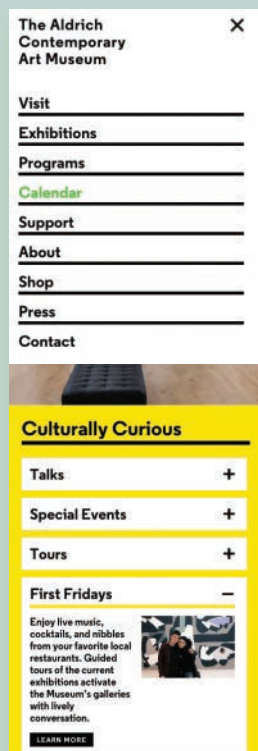


There's a staggering variety of content presented in this museum's website—from exhibition calendars to lecture descriptions to essays by curators, and images for every category. The 16-column grid that helps order it mixes modular and hierarchic gestures to create an easily navigable experience, and one that is lively with detail and color.

\_\_\_ In general, the vertical scroll of the pages in the site is split into horizontal bands, each of a color defined by the branding system—a palette of analogous hues that span the color wheel from yellow to blue violet. The bands tend to be subdivided left to right—sometimes into blocks of color and photograph, directly butting each other; and sometimes into groupings of module-like photographs, text chunks, and line details.

\_\_\_ One of the horizontal bands on the landing page (toward the lower left of the opposite page) presents blocks of color that display exhibition listings; this band scrolls horizontally in relation to the user's mouse direction and speed—a fun bit of functionality that serves to highlight this featured content and add contrast that offsets the page's verticality.

\_\_\_ The header is home to an extensive system of modular navigation links. It expands in depth upon click and remains so until a link is selected or the user clicks off. In a collapsed, smartphone context, the menu is drawn up into a shallow header (containing the ubiquitous “hamburger” menu icon); it expands as a list to cover the majority of the active screen area. The site's color blocking lends itself well to stacked scrolling as a single column within the smartphone environment; the bold linear detailing of the typography contrasts the flat planes and brings personality to the text.

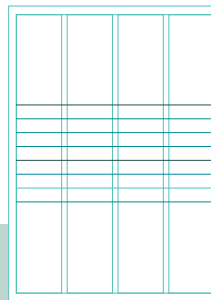








# Column Grid with Flexible Row Structure

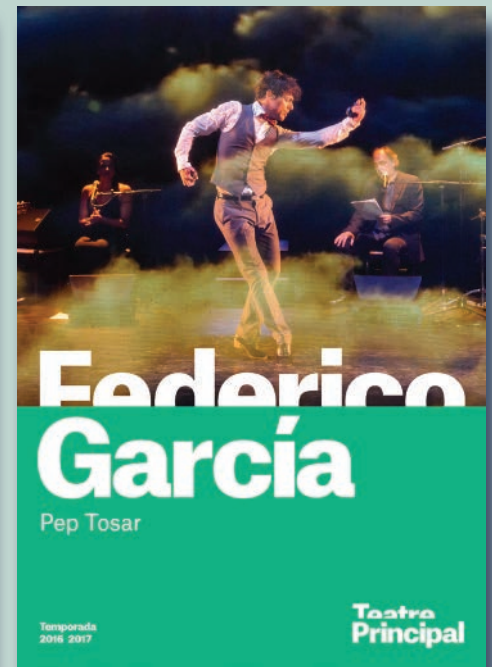


DESIGN

**Atlas**  
Balearic Islands | Spain  
**Visual brand identity for a municipal theater**

EXHIBIT COMPARISONS

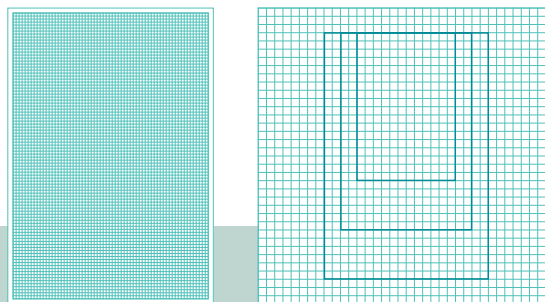
02 04 06 13 15 19 20  
30 34 35  
05 06 07 14 21 25 26



This identity for a performing arts organization centers on typography anchoring itself to structure, appearing to sink into it—visually, it creates the impression of a massive presence on a stage. Although the four-column grid that organizes layouts is relatively common, it's the use of the row structure that distinguishes it.

It's especially visible in the posters above. Vertical positioning of elements along the boundary between image and color field is determined by the row divisions, which have a specific proportional relationship to the headline typography. The row division, based on a proportion of type height, can be multiplied or subdivided to create new vertical dimensions; the four columns remain relatively consistent throughout the system.

# Modular Grid with Scaled Deviations



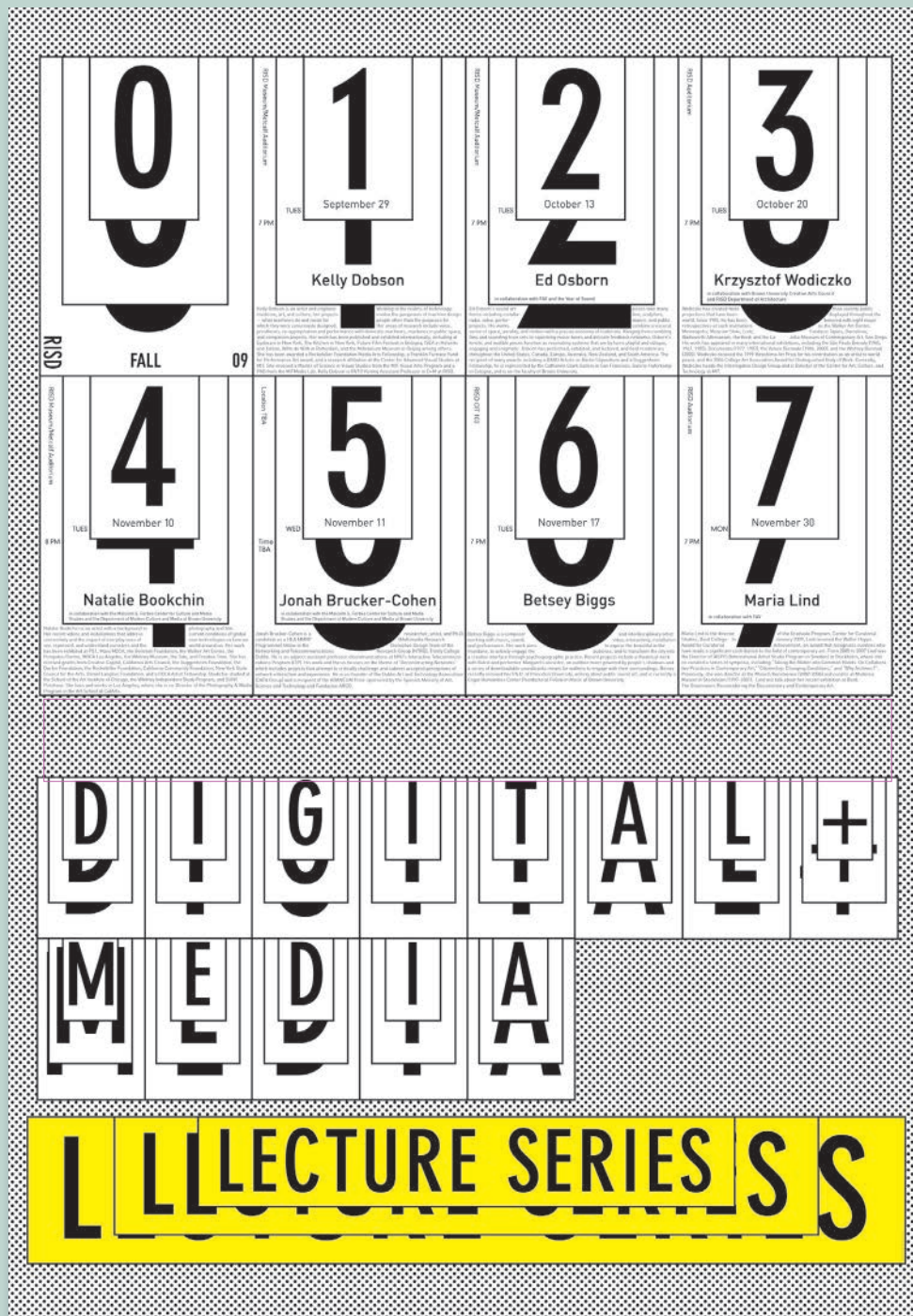
DESIGN

Skolos/Wedell  
Canton, MA | USA

Poster promoting a lecture series at Rhode Island School of Design [RISD]

EXHIBIT COMPARISONS

01 03 06 07 09 11 15  
21 24 28  
02 09 12 25 35



Because the subject of this poster is a series of lectures about digital media, the modular grid that is used to direct its composition and detailing is pixel like—more or less like that of the “graph paper” variant, in which the modules butt against each other.

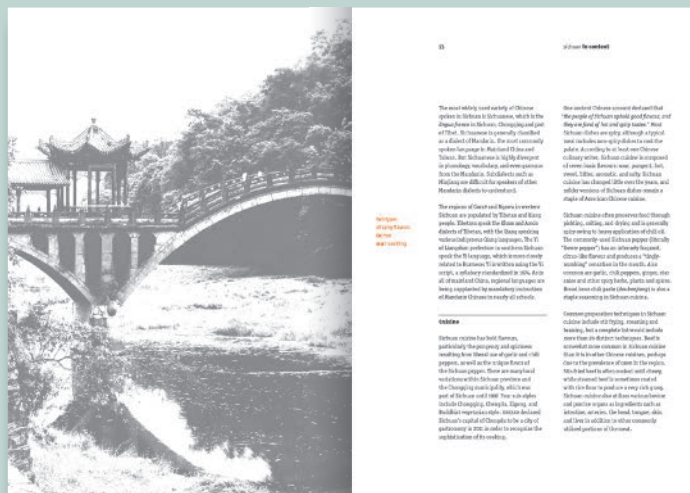
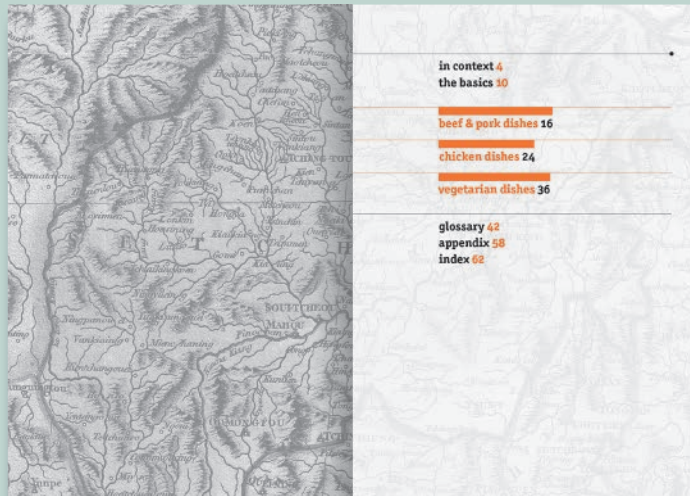
\_\_\_ The module is quite small, a square the width of the narrow spaces defined in the configuration of the word “Digital.” It’s used to generate a basic column structure for the lecture-info units, each marked by a large numeral, as well as to structure the proportions of the secondary column structure that contains the phrase “Digital Media.”

\_\_\_ Within each column area, the info-unit is repeated on itself and shrunk, proportionally, by some number of modules in depth. This creates a kind of kinetic zooming inward to each info-unit and opens a space below the numerals for date, speaker, and descriptive content. The repetition suggests not only a time-lapse movement, but overlapping interface windows, sticky notes, and a cut/paste quality that is associated with digital image making.

\_\_\_ The repeated overlap is carried over to the main titling configuration and to the announcement banner at the poster’s foot.



## Modular Grid



## DESIGN

Robert McConnell  
Timothy Samara, Instructor  
New York, NY | USA

Cookbook devoted to  
Sichuan cuisine and culture

## EXHIBIT COMPARISONS

02 04 08 12 17 18 23  
24 29 30 34  
05 07 16 28 30 35



This cookbook uses an 8 x 12 modular grid to permit precise control of recipe configurations. Beyond that functional consideration, the designer further used the grid's precision to position supporting text and graphical elements, based on the row depth and gutter.

An interesting deviation from the consistency of the grid's presence is the application of heavy rules that extend only the lengths of the recipe titles they accompany; this slight organicism, although subtle, is nonetheless noticeable as a welcome contrast to the overall rigidity of the presentation, as are the images that ghost behind text when crossing the page gutter.



# Compound Grid / Modular+Hierarchic


DESIGN

Meta Design SF

San Francisco, CA | USA

Website/online forum

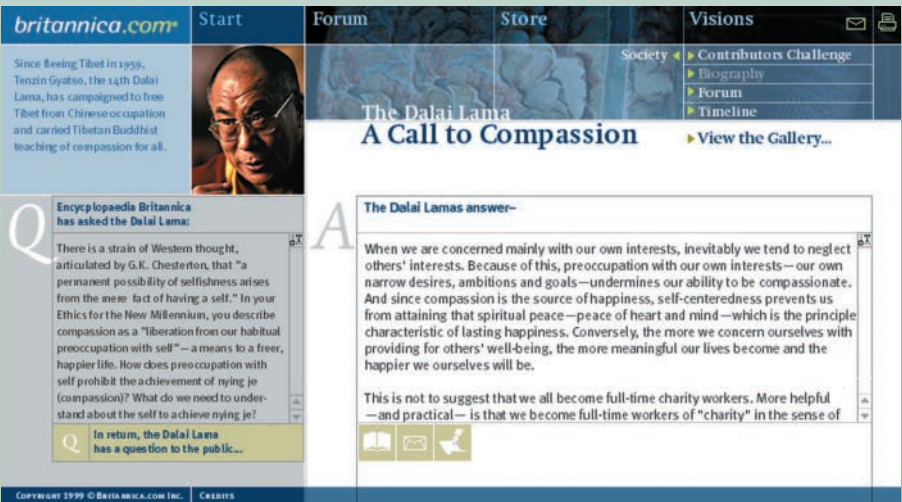
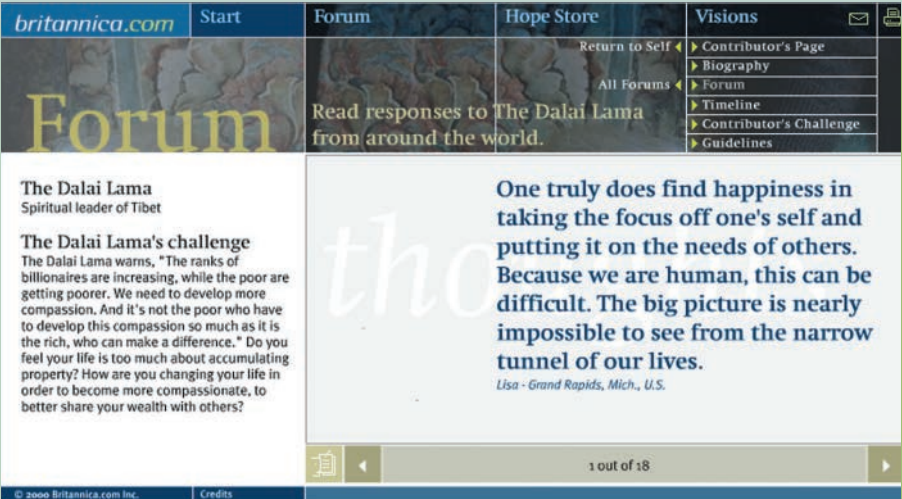
developed as a subsection of Britannica.com

EXHIBIT COMPARISONS

01 02 04 10 13 17 20

23 26 28 30

05 07 16 34 35



Visitors to the Books of Hope site, a subsection of Brittanica.com, can interact with some of the most important thinkers in the world, participate in discussions, view biographies, and peruse an extensive image gallery. A hierarchical grid houses the various areas and incorporates a number of interactive tools developed specifically for the site: timelines, galleries, and a forum in which users can respond to contributors' essays.

\_\_\_ The hierarchy is divided into four major areas: a branded navigational bar relating to Brittanica.com; a navigational area housed in modules that expand or collapse as needed; a left-hand column that acts as a lead-in or informational addendum to the primary content; and the primary content area, which houses timelines, essays, and biographies.

\_\_\_ Each hierarchical area assumes importance or diminishes in importance depending on where the user is located within the site; careful attention to type sizes and luminosity differences between grid areas helps some information recede when needed. The most important information in a particular screen comes forward clearly.

\_\_\_ The modular nature of the structure becomes evident in the interface details such as markers, pagination icons, and menus.

# Compound Grid / Hierarchic+Rotated-Column

I don't think I've ever made work that I thought would help me get a job.

We found a recent profile of *Other Means on Graffix*, which I think is maybe one of the real ones that are out there.

It's sort of real, yeah. [Laughs]

You talk a bit about the lack of humor in the design profession. How do you think that idea translates into your teaching?

I think for me, it's definitely the way that I communicate. It's certainly in the work that I make. I find that to be incredibly effective and therefore would probably push for something that would feel more playful. Not necessarily funny, but I find a lot of things that are too self-serious to not really communicate with me. In that it feels like it's sort of shut off and I'm not the audience for it. So I try to sort of push it in a different way.

Do you think it's harder to design with humor?

It depends. If the goal is to make someone laugh, it's not. The humor is the challenge that you give yourself—and making sure that you are having fun while you are doing it. Constructing systems along the way where you are making fun, not in the negative sense but in the way that you are sort of challenging... everything I think that just the choice of a typeface, there is so much room there to make a joke. Whether or not that's the thing that gets communicated, it's funny to yourself.

Do you think designers shouldn't take themselves too seriously?

It depends on what they're doing. The work that we do certainly allows us to do that. If we were doing a different kind of work, well, we would do a different kind of work for that reason, and there are certainly types of work that do not have room to be funny, but I'm really not interested in that way of working.

Ryan joined Pratt Graduate School after working for a few years at a design firm. He is currently a faculty member at Pratt College of Art and Design.

What advice would you give to someone just starting out?

If people are starting out, when they're younger, like, in high school? [Laughs]

Maybe not that young, maybe young professionals.

[Ryan] I think, I mean, I started out when I was really young. By the time I was in eighth grade, I was hired to do websites. I feel like knowing a lot of people when you're younger is the best if you want to be working on your own, because it's difficult to make those connections when you're younger.

I don't think I've ever made work that I thought would help me get a job.

Now, having worked with these guys for two and a half years, we have built a very specific body of work. We don't get approached by people who don't know us, for the most part. Just in the past six months has that started happening. For the most part, people approach us because they know someone we have worked for or they have seen a project that we have done. They have a pretty good understanding about how we might go at our work.



EunSun Lee founded DINK+WATTS, INC., a multidisciplinary studio focusing on design solutions for interiors, fashion, print, and motion graphics. She is currently a faculty member at Pratt College of Art and Design.

## EunSun Lee

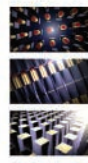
So you're an alumna of the Graduate program, as well as being a faculty member.

Yes, I graduated in 2003.

How was the program changed since you were a student?

It changed a little bit. The motion part of our department has gotten bigger and bigger. At the time I was in school, there was basically no motion. These days, our industry has changed completely, so it's not really flat anymore. There are a lot of layers that you need to think about. And motion is part of that.

I think it's really important for someone to have a graphic design sense but then know the technique to make things move around.



There's a big market for motion. And if someone is good at graphic design and is not afraid to try new things, then he or she can learn it.

My background was graphic design. Like, purely graphic design. I was in the magazine industry and there was this big event and they wanted to create an opening. So I played with it as a test and they liked it. So I started doing more and more motion work. That's why I got two titles. I was the senior art director plus multimedia director. And other than that, I wanted to do more serious things, so that's why I started my company. I wanted to do a little of this and a little of that.

What was it like to go from being an art director to then deciding to start your own studio?

When I started out on my own, everyone said, you are crazy. It must have been scary.

I wanted to do something more than publishing. At the time, I was scared, too. I was like, "If I fail, it's not just my life, it's my business. You need clients. You need to have someone to pay you to do something."

[Group laughter]

I started my company, and through the publishing industry but then connections. We had a good relationship so they came to me little by little. It was a really interesting moment and began a new chapter of my life. But that was the perfect decision and the perfect timing.

2 Motion sequence for EunSun Lee.

3 Stop-motion for EunSun Lee.

## MOTION DESIGN THREE DIMENSIONS TWO DIMENSIONS



What is your studio like now?

Our studio is kind of an interesting format. Someone said to me, "How do you have any collaboration or marketing person or anyone. Why does it?" Basically, we're all designers. Everyone here. Every single person does design. Everyone has different types of strengths.



They're kind of supporting each other, even if they have a totally different type of project. If someone is working creative, someone might say, "Oh, do you need help?" If someone has to stay late, someone else might say if they need help. And they'll support and get ready to go back to work and help their team. That's the kind of working style we have here. That's why I'm really happy when I add someone to the team.



So as a teacher, how do you prepare your students to be part of a design team?

They need a full experience. The starting point is a problem and they need to find a solution. They need to include production and research, a whole bunch of different steps. I usually share my experiences with every single step, and kind of try and guide them in that way.

I try to push them as much as I can. I tell them to go crazy. Experimentation is totally



five. And it's fun to watch that. I think that's the beauty of class projects. In the real world, it's a little different. [Laughs] A lot more conditions you have to follow. But I think that's not a job, no matter what the conditions—we need to find a solution.

Why do you like to teach? What's the relationship between your practice and being an educator?

I like teaching because after my students have finished their projects, I feel really happy. I feel like, [Singing] ah-hah-hah-hah. It's not really my project, and it's not really my baby, but it's like they did it! That feeling, that last moment, because of that moment I want to keep teaching. Sometimes to get there, it's very tough, but because of that moment, it's really good.

Absolutely.

Another benefit is that I can look at what they do, and I can pick one of the top talent to join my studio.

[Load laughter]

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Design education at its very best must address how the strategic environment is what our future graduates and practice.

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Letter from Our Chair

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## DESIGN

Level Design Group  
New York, NY | USA

*In Dialogue*, a publication  
promoting the MFA Design  
program at Pratt Institute

## EXHIBIT COMPARISONS

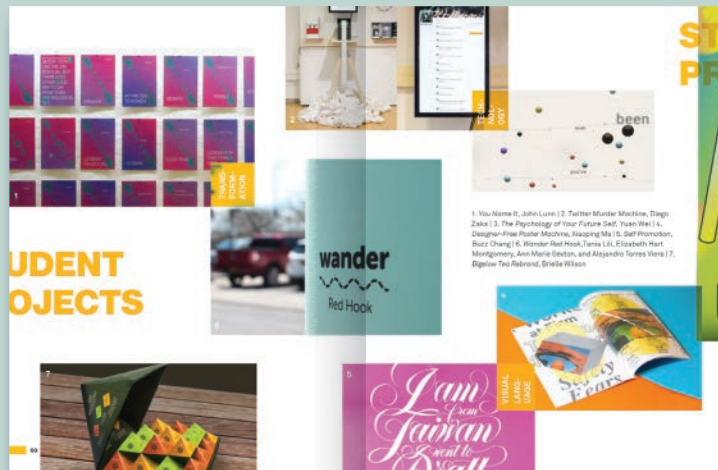
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22 24 29 31  
02 04 05 07 09 14 16  
17 18 21 25 29 32 34  
35



As its title, *In Dialogue*, suggests, this publication focuses on discussions and interviews as a vehicle for understanding the academic environment it advances. Initially, the grid use appears straightforward: a hierarchic, wide outer column and a narrow inner column. \_\_\_\_ And then—images appear to cross between the two columns; text and images both appear to scroll off the tops and bottoms of pages; and text starts to leave the column boundaries altogether. Then, in a secondary section, all of the content rotates 90°.

\_\_\_\_ In the first section, the hierarchic grid in place is being cheated slightly. Even though, for the most part, text occupies the wide column and images or captions occupy the narrow one, the designers feel free to shift material around in order to impart a casual, conversational tone to the layouts. The notion of time, as it relates to the interplay of speakers, is also expressed by elements traveling from one spread to another.

\_\_\_\_ This quality becomes more pronounced in the second section noted, when a new structure is introduced: a three-column grid, set to run sideways, and occupying the same margins as the hierarchic grid. The change signals a change in the content's focus and plays up the movement of text and images across boundaries, whether those of each other or the pages.





Breaking the Grid

Using a grid structure to organize text and imagery in visual communication is part of the status quo of designing. It's a convention and, like all conventions, it is suitable for achieving particular goals. Designers are well advised to remember that their purpose is to facilitate the clearest and most compelling experiences for their audiences. Using a grid may not offer the best solution toward that end; assuming that one should be imposed may, in fact, compromise the information's integrity.

Clarity can mean different things in different contexts: Sometimes content has its own internal structure that must be upheld to be understood; sometimes content must ignore structure altogether to create specific kinds of emotional reaction, or to invoke an important narrative association; sometimes it requires a more complex intellectual involvement on the part of the audience in order to resonate more profoundly.

There are numerous ways to deliver understandable, meaningful experiences that are equally valid—ways that run counter to the rationalist approach of grid-based structure. Exploring alternative means for organizing and visualizing content often creates opportunities to transcend its literal, pragmatic meaning, and to engage and inform with a richer, more specific, and uniquely memorable, visual language.

## 2

## On the Other Hand—

### A Historical Survey of Non-Structural Design Tendencies

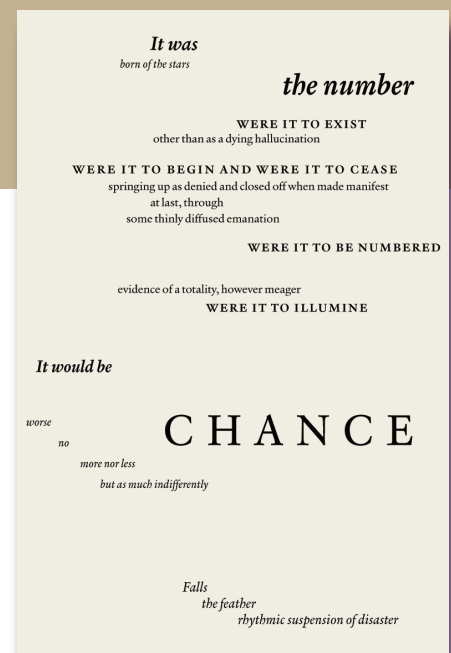
Until the late twentieth century, the design industry tended to focus on the more or less steadily increasing influence of rationalism when it traced its development or promoted itself, and with good reason: emphasizing the pragmatic, rational aspects of design helps clients understand and trust the design industry as a resource. But every field of artistic endeavor comprises different schools of thought, some of them contradictory, and graphic design is no exception. Just as the use of grids in modern design practice grew from developments in technology, aesthetic thought, and industrialization, the use of alternate, intuitive methods of composition—prevalent in current design practice—grew from these same influences.

\_\_\_ Along with the marvels of mechanized production came a proficiency at cruelty and destruction. The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were plagued by war on a scale that was previously unknown, facilitated by such innovations as the Gatling gun, tanks, grenades, and mines. This madness, coupled with Sigmund Freud's publications about the human psyche, fueled an exploration of the absurd and primal in art and design. As early as the 1880s, a tendency toward primal image making as a reaction to the devastation of machines and war began to find a voice: Art Nouveau's sensual plant

imagery signaled a pursuit of the individual, organic, and idiosyncratic in design; Expressionism's aggressive works showed a growing preoccupation with suffering in the human condition; Dada and Surrealism explored the subconscious, dream states, and the absurdities of language and culture.

#### A NEW VISUAL REALITY

These latter movements began as reactions to World War I. Co-opting the strange, new language of visual abstraction, the Dadaists applied it to verbal language to express their horror over the war. In 1914, the poet Hugo Ball opened the Cabaret Voltaire in Zurich as a meeting place for poets, writers, musicians, and artists who shared this outrage. They included Tristan Tzara, who prepared their manifestos and edited the magazine *DADA*; Jean Arp, a painter and sculptor; and, later, Marcel Duchamp, a painter who began his career as a Cubist but was more fascinated by symbolism and linguistic games. Language and experience became bound in Dada's explosive word poems and nonsense posters where words failed to correspond to any explicit meaning. In Dada, letters and



#### *Le Hasard [Chance] / Poetry Study*

After Stéphane Mallarmé

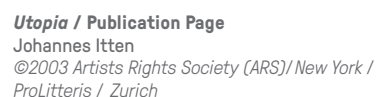
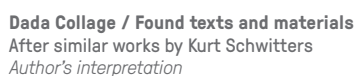
Author's schematic recreation,  
presented in English translation



— This poeticizing of visual expression—characterized by visual word play and the signification of subject matter or actual experience by unrelated signs—was rapidly

Collage was another new visual analogy that built on the reenvisioning of form begun in Cubism, which juxtaposed found images in dynamic relationships where chance could play a role in the perception of meaning. The Berlin Dadaists Hanna Hoch and Raoul Hausmann were among the first known artists to employ collage. The designer and artist Kurt Schwitters, who worked in Hanover, is particularly notable for helping to establish both grid-based and irrational systems in design. Schwitters's work as a Dadaist was supported by his business as an advertising designer with prestigious accounts. His output of collaged typographic clippings and refuse alternated with professional posters and layouts for magazines, including his own, *Merz*, which featured articles and visual essays based on his nonsense poems. Schwitters frequently collaborated with Theo van Doesburg and El Lissitzky, blending his Constructivist interests with those of Dada. Schwitters is one of several designers in the

\_\_\_\_ The close association of irrational and rational approaches was also evident in the Weimar Bauhaus before the school made a decisive shift toward rationalism in its curriculum. Johannes Itten, a member of the *Blaue Reiter* group of painters, was instrumental in setting up the Bauhaus foundation curriculum which, among other things, stressed the exploration of personally derived abstract mark making. Itten's experiments in the type shop, before Moholy-Nagy replaced him in 1923, had begun to incorporate painterly, nonrectilinear composition, and the use of elements from the type case: he used lines of lead, usually reserved for spacing, as a decorative element to visually enhance the emphasis within type. In his



\_\_\_\_ World War II scattered and isolated a number of designers, and attention shifted to innovative developments in Switzerland's two cultural centers, Zurich and Basel. Designers in Zurich pursued a rational intellectualism that privileged typography and grid systems (see **Coming to Order**, pp. 12–19). Basel designers, on the contrary—working in the context of that city's humanist tradition—

## Garanten für eine gute Verfassung:

[illegible]

**Radikal Liste 1 / Poster**  
Emil Ruder  
*Reproduced from* Typography  
*Niggli Verlag, Zurich, 1960*

\_\_\_ Seen this way, Ruder's work is a nexus point in codifying those syntactic and semi-otic experiments within the framework of the International Style as it was developing: he actively helped assimilate the seeds of grid

swimming  
double  
stutstutstutter  
misplaced  
half-  
lethargic

128

deconstruction into the rational aesthetic of structuralist graphic design. As a teacher, his experiments and interaction with his students would become profoundly influential.

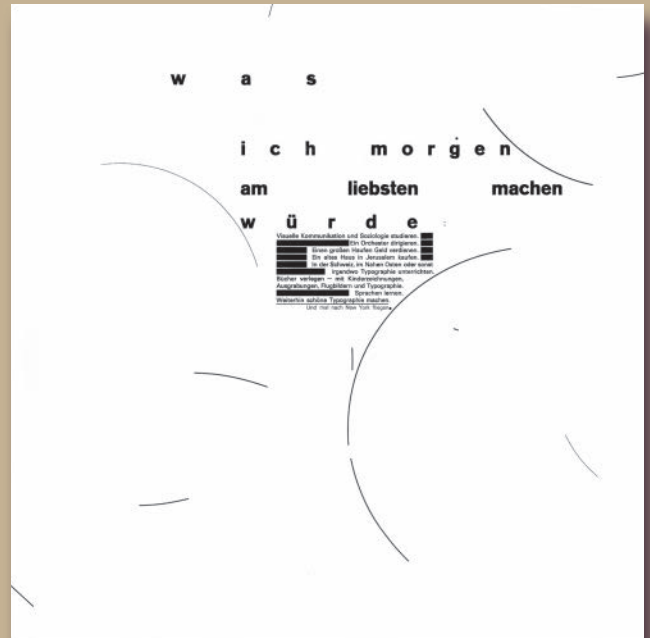
#### AGAINST THE ESTABLISHMENT

By the mid-1960s, the International Style was becoming entrenched as a design methodology in Europe and the United States. Students from the Basel and Zurich schools—and also from the *Kunstgewerbeschule* in Ulm, Germany—were disseminating its reductive aesthetic. Corporations benefited from the unifying and cost-efficient aspects of the grid-based identity systems that these students advocated. But as the younger design community—along with everyone else—continued its recovery from the second World War, it was becoming increasingly critical of

established ways of thinking, increasingly wary of corporate and governmental motives, and increasingly interested in opposing the kind of classist impulses that had repressed and brutalized specific groups of people in the war. In the United States, the civil rights movement drew attention to disenfranchised groups; revolutions in Cuba and China evinced similar kinds of unrest. In the midst of the International Style's methodical efficiency, a search for expression based on personal experience and narrative was catalyzed by the visceral thump of rock n' roll, the sexual revolution, and the rise of popular youth culture. Psychedelia, television, and a rediscovery of Art Nouveau gave rise to design idioms and countermovements that don't fit neatly into the bigger trends: Victor Moscoso and Haight-Ashbury psychedelic rock posters on the West Coast of America; Milton Glaser, Seymour Chwast, and the idiosyncratic, historical illustrative style of the PushPin Group; and the "big idea" conceptual advertising of Bob Gill, Bill Bernbach, and Henry Wolf. These and other approaches flourished in the 1960s

and 1970s despite the International Style; they worked around Modernism, quietly influencing dramatic changes that would happen within.

— In Basel, Emil Ruder's students were studying fundamental typographic principles when a young typesetter's apprentice from Stuttgart joined the school. Wolfgang Weingart had been trained in a traditional German type shop, but had been exposed to the work of Hofmann, Müller-Brockman, and Ruder by an older apprentice; fascinated by the unfamiliar image-oriented typographic approach of the Swiss, he had come to Basel in 1964 to be



*Was Ich Morgen... / Typographic study*  
Wolfgang Weingart  
Courtesy of the designer



*Geigy / Brochure Cover*  
Steff Geissbühler  
Courtesy of the designer



trained as a designer. His personal type shop experiments, which incorporated the accidental printing of letterpress material—like the lead lines used to separate individual lines of type—had given him entry to the school. But Ruder’s methodical exploration of typographic nuance intimidated and bored Weingart, who was more comfortable making images with elements from the type case. Having absorbed a good deal of Swiss

thinking in his apprenticeship, however, Weingart began his own systematic exploration of typographic form, but with a marked difference: it extrapolated the idea of visually semantic composition—type that bases its visual form on the verbal structure of the words it represents—beyond the functional presentation sought by Ruder, and into a personal, idiosyncratic, and texturally expressive approach akin to painting.

Weingart looked at the understructures and absolute formal qualities of the material he was working with as indicators of potential new ways to compose. Highlighting groups of words in proximity to each other with reversed-out white areas created secondary sentences playing in the paragraph; filling in the negative spaces created by the ragged edge of a paragraph added architectural impact on a page; and combining letterforms into new shapes or spacing them out in self-consciously visual arrangements emphasized their structural qualities or made reference to forms in the environment.

— Weingart uncovered a new visual potential for language by deconstructing it, and the significance of this work was profound. It implied that rational structure—the grid—could be one of many possible systems for organizing visual material, and that context is an important factor in determining which system is best for a specific project.

#### THE ICONOCLASTS AND THE ACADEMY

In 1968, Armin Hofmann asked Weingart to teach. At the same time, Weingart was being asked to lecture and show his work around the world. His typographical approach, in concert with the teaching of Hofmann, influenced generations of Basel students. The individuality of his approach was espe-



*Ausstellung / Poster*  
Wolfgang Weingart  
Courtesy of the designer



*Typographische Monatsblätter / Journal Cover*  
Wolfgang Weingart  
Courtesy of the designer



cially appealing to young design students, who were now coming to Basel from a number of countries. Among them were Americans like April Greiman, a student of Basel graduates Hans U. Allemann, Inge Druckrey, and Christine Zelinsky at the Kansas City Art Institute in Missouri. Weingart's dimensional approach to space and his mixing of textures had a tremendous impact on her design process. She returned to America, freelanced and taught in Philadelphia, Boston, and New York, and eventually landed in Los Angeles in the early 1980s.

\_\_\_ Greiman began experimenting with various emerging technologies, like video, in combination with found images and conventional printing techniques, which continued to define the new visual language of Basel and similarly oriented design schools. Other students, as well as those who went on to teach—at schools like Philadelphia College of

Art and Carnegie Mellon—and to work in New York and Los Angeles, brought the mixture of discipline and experimentation with them. A “New Wave” of Swiss and Swiss-trained designers—Dan Friedman, Valerie Pettis, Willi Kunz, Steff Geissbuhler, Chris Myers—joined Greiman and others in assimilating this new development into the mainstream of design practice.

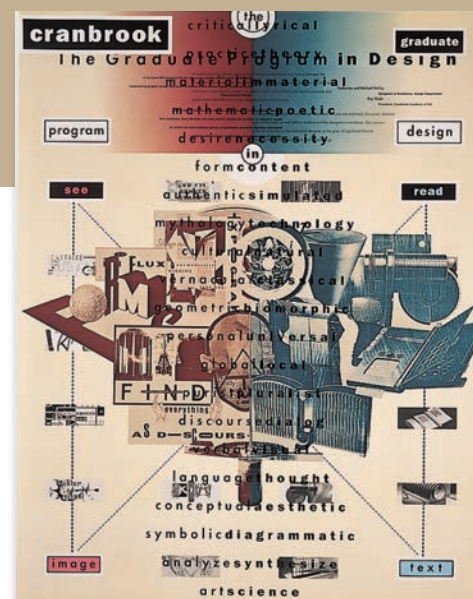
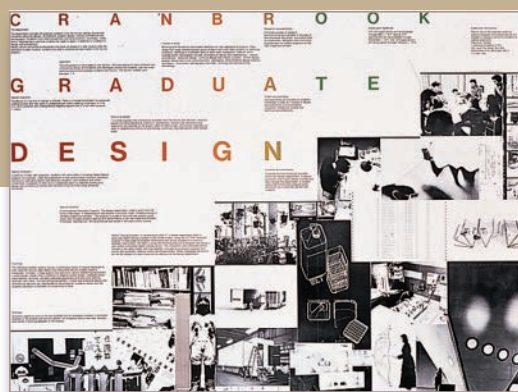
### NEW DISCOURSES IN FORM

In 1970, a recently graduated industrial designer in Chicago named Katherine McCoy found herself in a graphic design position at Unimark International, working in the minimal Swiss International Style that Unimark was employing to reshape the corporate visual world. After a year, she began to teach graphic design at Cranbrook Academy, an art and design institution in Michigan with a long history of involvement in avant-garde architecture. McCoy's initial curricula were derivative of the grid-based typographic methods she had become accustomed to at Unimark. But in the experimental and highly intellectual environment of Cranbrook, she and her fellow faculty began to consider

the visual system they were perpetuating. By this time, Weingart's experiments were becoming widely known.

\_\_\_ In addition, the writings of architects Robert Venturi and Denise Scott-Brown were having a wide impact. Their seminal 1972 book, *Learning from Las Vegas*, helped establish a radical new regard for the vernacular: rather than dismiss garish, naïve, and popular visual expressions like drive-ins and gambling strips, designers could incorporate these idiosyncratic forms as a way of resonating on a more personal level with their audiences. McCoy's close friend (and later Cranbrook student), Edward Fella, was particularly interested in vernacular signage and lettering; others began to explore game show iconography, historic type forms, and coding systems as sources for visualization that would create a graphic counterpart to the ideas Venturi and Scott-Brown were propagating.

\_\_\_ Political and social concerns came to the forefront of designers' minds once again; at Cranbrook and on the West Coast, these pop culture deformations were giving voice to discussions about race, gender, and class by visually distinguishing them from the smooth



Vitra Workspirit / Product brochure  
April Greiman  
Courtesy of the designer

Cranbrook Graduate Design / Poster  
Katherine McCoy  
Courtesy of the designer

See/Read/Image/Text:  
Cranbrook Graduate Design / Poster  
Katherine McCoy  
Courtesy of the designer



veneer of the corporate International Style. A second result was that they also separated from what they considered an East Coast/European design establishment. Many designers from that establishment viewed the work at Cranbrook through a filter that categorized it as either simply ugly or as morally wrong, a repudiation of the progress for which Modernism had struggled.

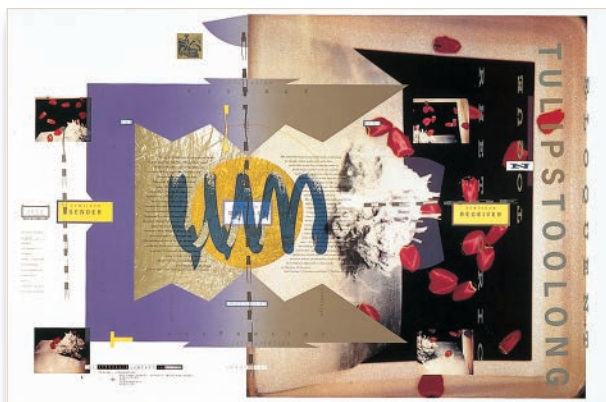
\_\_\_ Within the design counterculture, however, the sense that they were exploring a late form of Modernism, a self-critical and mannered form, pervaded their experiments. During the period between 1971 and 1984, the word *deconstruction* was coined to describe their intentions: to break apart preconceived structures, or to use those structures as a starting point for new avenues of discovery. In addition to Venturi and Scott-Brown's writings, influences like that of the poststructural philosopher Michel Foucault and the semiotician Roland Barthes, as well as visual influences from the Swiss New Wave, were filtering into the mix. Dissecting these varied sources and then rebuilding exaggerated configurations of type and image based on the findings became the hallmark of work produced at Cranbrook by designers like Robert Nakata, Allen Hori, Lorraine Wilde, Lucille Tenazas, Scott Santoro, Laurie Haycock (Makela), and P. Scott Makela.

Cranbrook wasn't the only hotbed of such investigation during the 1970s and early 1980s. East Coast designers and educational institutions assimilated their Western counterparts' output and recognized their own countercultural impulses—especially around the environs of New York City, the birthplace of Pop Art, a movement that celebrated the vernacular, and the influence of which was increasingly prevalent. Sheila deBretteville, educated at Barnard College, mixed Feminist activism and public art-making with such vernacular images as eye-bolts and quilting. Pop and activism informed the work of Warren Lehrer, a Yale graduate, who explored deconstructions of vernacular imagery and typography to reveal “the vagaries and

luminescence of character, the relationships between social structures and the individual, and the pathos and absurdity of life.” His books, in particular *French Fries*, merge a variety of graphic and metaphorical gestures.

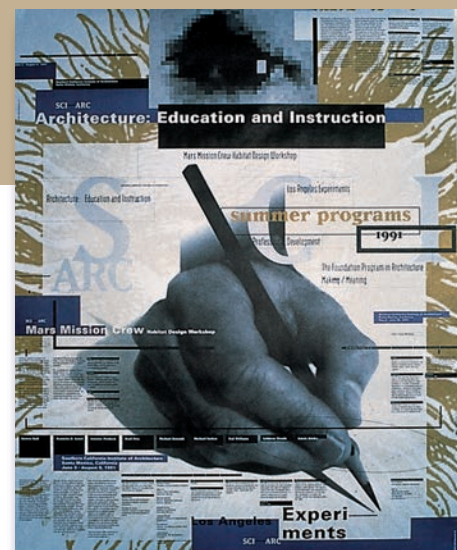
## THE SECOND INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

And then—the computer happened. Apple Computer's 1984 introduction of the desktop computer with a graphical interface yielded a revolution in design practice similar in scale to that of the Industrial Revolution of the 1780s. Designers were quick to exploit the



*Tulipstoolong* / Poster  
Allen Hori  
Courtesy of the designer

*French Fries* / Book spread  
Warren Lehrer  
Courtesy of the designer



*Sci-Arc Summer Programs* / Poster  
April Greiman  
Courtesy of the designer



new technology for the rapid and seamless manipulation of image and type that its programs facilitated. April Greiman's work incorporated the image-editing capability of the computer into her process of hybridizing media, typography, and perceptual space. Cranbrook's investigations were catalyzed by these same new capabilities, which extrapolated their already challenging deconstructions into three-dimensional space.

#### FROM AN UNEXPECTED QUARTER

The shift from traditional hand skills to digital designing and production introduced high-level digital editing and typesetting to a vast audience; in this way, the incorporation of vernacular modes of expression was complemented by a reverse assimilation of design craft by individuals who weren't trained as graphic designers. David Carson epitomized this paradigmatic shift.

— A surfer and sociology graduate, Carson came to design by working at *Beach Culture*, a California surf magazine. His unstudied layouts relied on an intuitive sense of placement that spoke more about interpreting the experience of the content, not about rationally or impartially organizing it. By using the extensive typesetting capabilities of the computer, Carson was able to explore typographic arrangements and effects that had



been impossible before its invention: overlapping lines of type and letters that flipped backwards and forwards, dense textures of type and image, and columns of type whose contours weren't parallel—or, for that matter, straight lines at all. Where the Cranbrook experiments were still referring to the idea of structure, Carson's work ignored it. In his design of the culture magazine *Raygun*, published between 1991 and 1996, no overarching structure exists; the ferocity of the layouts and the continual destruction of conformity on every page visually define a system that is identifiable and understandable, despite the lack of a consistent editorial grid structure.

— This type of system for generating visual cohesion through intuitive, spontaneous relationships was further popularized by the work of the American type publishers Emigre, by British designers like Siobahn Keaney and Jonathan Barnbrook, and by firms like

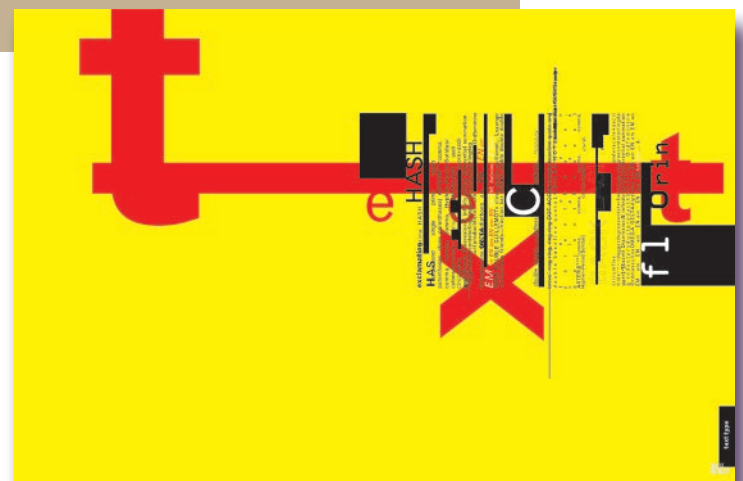
Why Not Associates. In project after project, these designers were violating conventional ideas about structure in favor of organization that reflected ideas about time, film, and the expanding world of digital interactivity.

— As designers have assimilated the computer's visual capabilities and its ubiquitous presence in daily life—as well as innovations in conceptual visualization—the notion of experientially driven presentation has gained importance as a viable, user-centric method for organizing information. Interactive media, in particular, has changed the way people access and process information. Intuitive and idiosyncratic approaches to organization participate on equal terms with rational approaches based on grid structures. The designer's set of tools now includes several methods for conveying ideas from which the designer can choose the most appropriate for a given project.



**Hanging at Carmine Street / Spread from *Beach Culture***  
David Carson  
Courtesy of the designer

***Raygun* / Periodical spreads**  
David Carson  
Courtesy of the designer



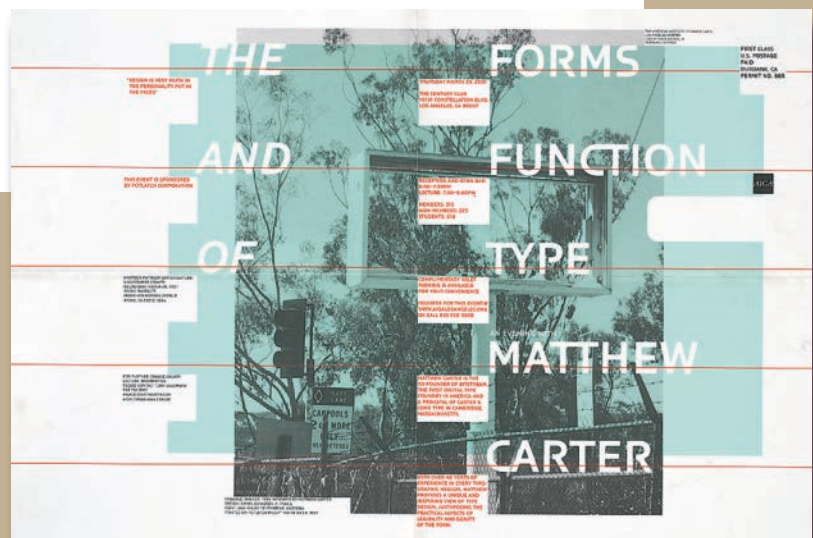
***Typography Now* / Book spread**  
Why Not Associates  
Published by Booth-Clibborn Editions, 1991  
Courtesy of Andy Bell

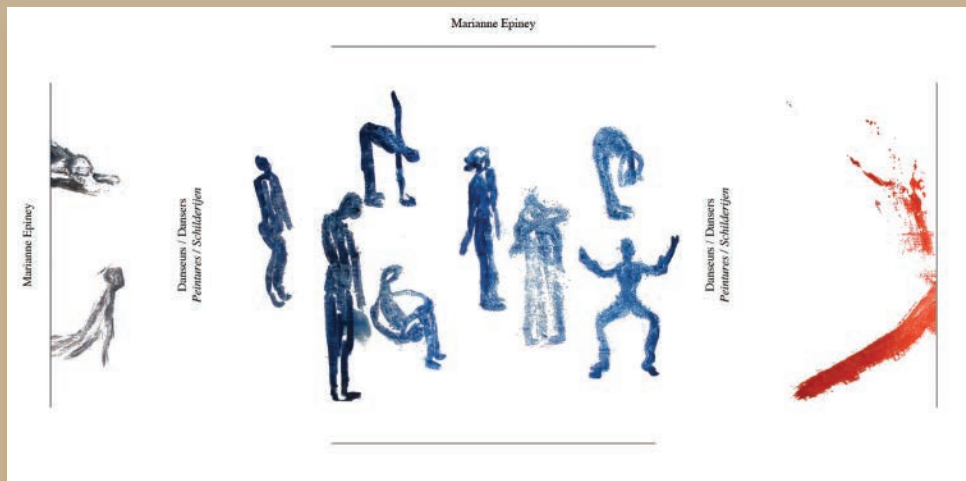
Designers need not totally discard the notion of structure in their search for compositional options beyond the grid. One possibility is deconstruction: taking apart or subverting a grid to generate new spatial relationships. But, there are also many kinds of structure that happen to not be based on a logic of repeating, modular—or even orthogonal (90°)—geometry. They may derive from those found in nature, such as are seen in crystals and molecules, or the branches of trees; they may derive just as easily from mathematical or formal relationships, like those that are nested or concentric.

The appreciation of a particular structure often instigates an association with certain physical experiences—and so non-grid-based structures, too, can impart metaphorical or narrative understanding. Being familiar with, and open to, a variety of arrangement possibilities gives designers greater latitude to best architect a project's space and thereby serve the content's needs.

**Here, an underlying grid has been violated in subtle ways: the title type baseline has slipped under the red flowlines; two shifting planes of tonality throw space into question. In addition, a simple verbal breakdown in the title hints at another kind of deconstruction.**

Simon Johnston / USA





**This artist's website presents information and free-form arrangements of her work organized symmetrically on both the horizontal and vertical axes.**

Meeus Ontwerpt / Netherlands

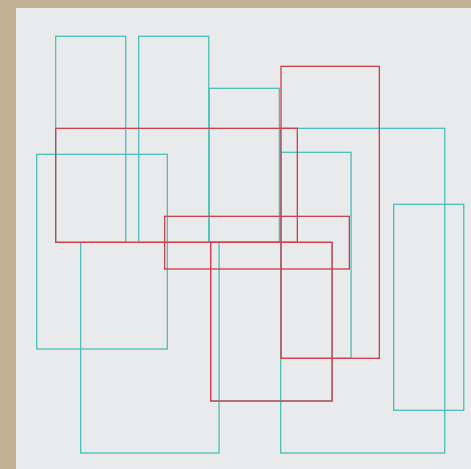
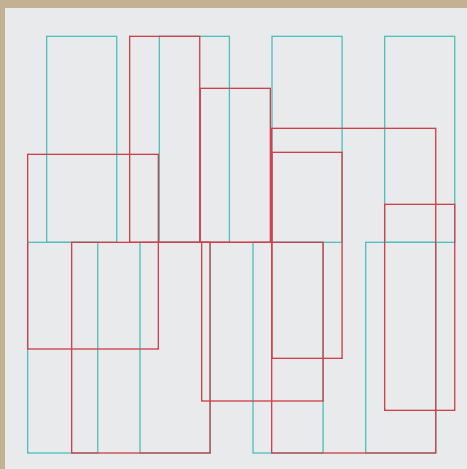
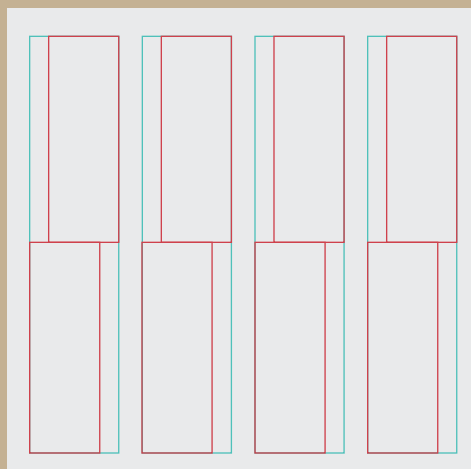
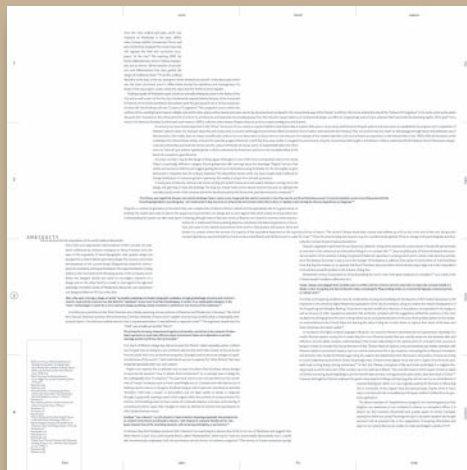
The designers of this poster slice apart its pictorial space along diagonal axes that radiate from a fixed point. The resulting dramatic, dimensional planes create a deep, illusory perspective that exaggerates the vast, industrial spaces of the building that the poster promotes for a variety of uses.

Insect / UK





## Splitting, Splicing, and Shifting



Altering a familiar structure—even a simple, two- or three-column grid—is an excellent introduction to exploring alternative kinds of structure; and the most straightforward way of altering it is to manipulate it along its inherent orthogonal axes. The process for doing so is relatively simple: First, the designer installs a base grid... And then changes how columns and rows relate to each other—by separating them at irregular intervals; “cutting” through them in the opposing direction and sliding the “parts” horizontally or vertically, together or separately; by widening some columns and rows but not others; and

so on. It’s important to watch what happens when information that would normally appear in an expected place—marking a structural juncture in the grid—is moved to another place, perhaps aligned with some other kind of information in a way that creates a new verbal connection that didn’t exist before. Such shifted information might end up behind or on top of some other information if a change in size or density accompanies the shift in placement. The optical confusion that results will often create situations where foreground and background appear to swap places. A conventional grid structure repeat-

ed in different orientations could be used to explore a more dynamic architectural space by creating different axes of alignment. Similarly, overlapping grids with modules of different proportions, or that run at right angles in relation to each other, can introduce a kind of order to the spatial and directional ambiguity that layering creates, especially if some elements are oriented on both layers simultaneously.

In the group of experimental broadsides shown opposite, a classical four-column structure sequentially gives way to a three-dimensional space in which columns intersect, overlap, and rotate into each other. The base grid is diagrammed under each new panel's deconstruction method to show the cumulative effects of new alterations on the structure at each stage.

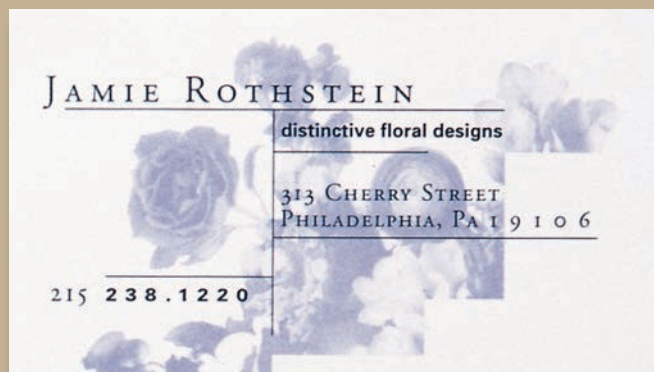
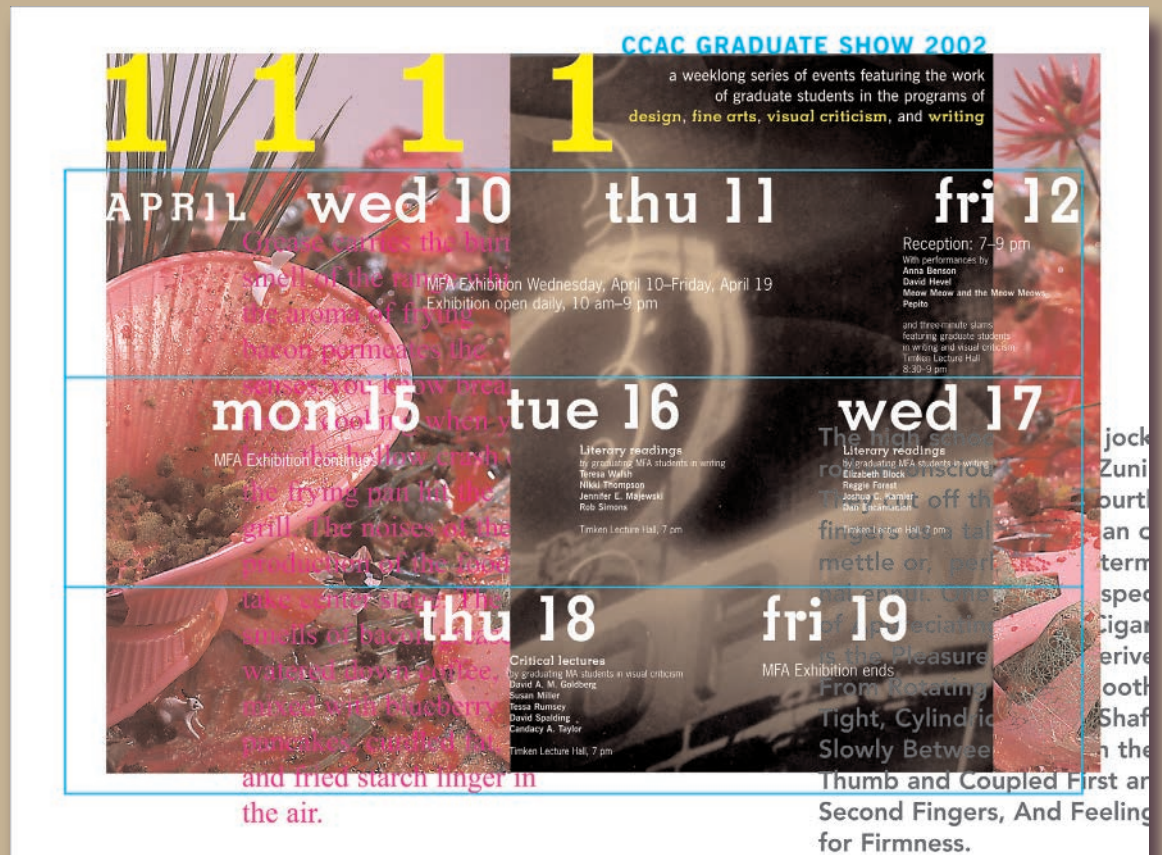
Jenny Chan / USA

The conventional calendar grid that gave rise to this poster's overlapping layers remains as a vestige to help navigation; although only a hint of the modular structure is

visible in the stepped movement of informational chunks, the blue row structure directs reading from a familiar standpoint. Images that might originally have occupied left- and

right-hand columns have been spliced and reordered to create a strong vertical substructure.

Tenazas Design / USA

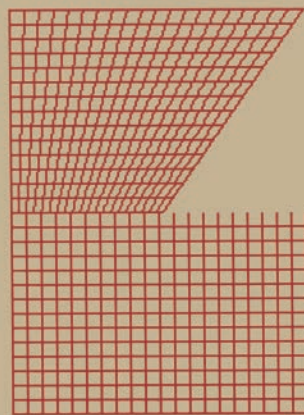


Complex grid splicing and shifting may be used even for typically simple format applications, as seen in this unconventionally dynamic business card that emphasizes the "distinctive" aspect of its owner's floral work.

Mayer+Myers Design / USA

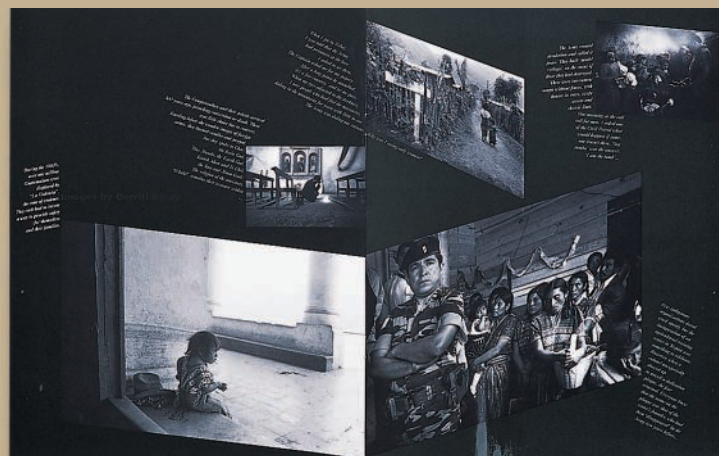
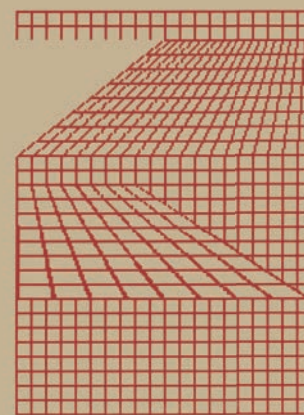
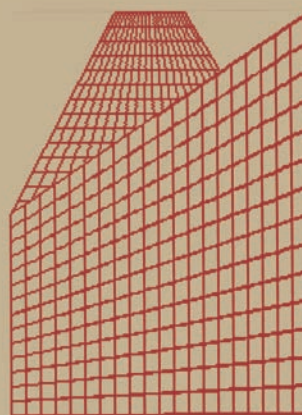


## Deformation and Distortion



A simple modular grid, without gutters between modules, is the starting point for a dimensional deconstruction. Groups of flowlines and column lines are distorted to explore possibilities of exaggerated illusory space and dimensionality.

Kristie Williams / USA



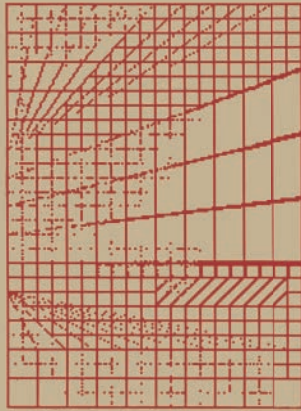
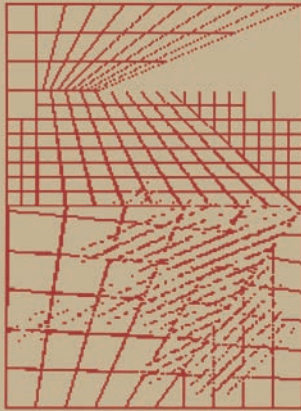
In contrast to splicing and shifting, altering the actual shapes of columns and rows produces a compositional effect that is far more organic, where the orthogonal underpinning of the base grid's structure becomes less apparent. Pulling edges of columns and rows out of parallel alignment emphasizes diagonal axes. Structures that are reshaped this way may still be organized side-by-side, so to speak, so as to appear as though they occupy the same surface; or, they may be shifted or rotated to move over or under each other. This kind of deformation often results in the illusion of perspective as newly

created angles converge; the effect is greatly enhanced if content within columns changes in size or spacing to correspond with perceived changes in spatial location from near to far. Of course, columns and rows may be deformed to be curvilinear, not only angular, in shape—whether as circles, waves, or free-form organic shapes.

Deformed structures in these two magazine spreads yield different spatial experiences: The trapezoidal columns in the spread at left appear to tensely butt against each other on the surface; paragraphs and images in the spread at right appear as tilted planes within a dimensional space.

Thomas Ockerse / USA





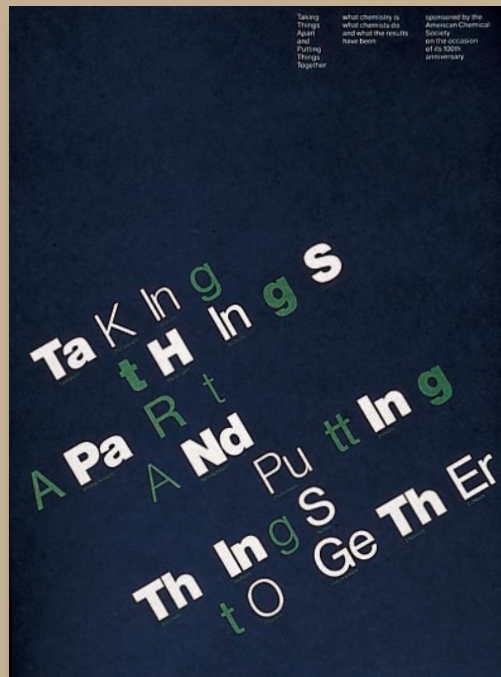
Given that the conventional scrolling function of webpages can rapidly regularize perceived movement into a vertically constrained stream, grid deformation can introduce greater, unexpected, lateral movement and a perception of deeper space for improved visual interest. As columns' or rows' altered shapes come into view within the browser area and then recede, their irregularity is abruptly reinforced by the orthogonal consistency of the browser "window's" edges.

Curvilinear deformations in this poster's structures retain their familiar column characteristics—which help viewers parse the unexpected shapes for text and images—while contributing an equally recognizable pictorial

reference that supports communication of the poster's subject matter on a more inventive narrative level.

Timothy Samara / USA



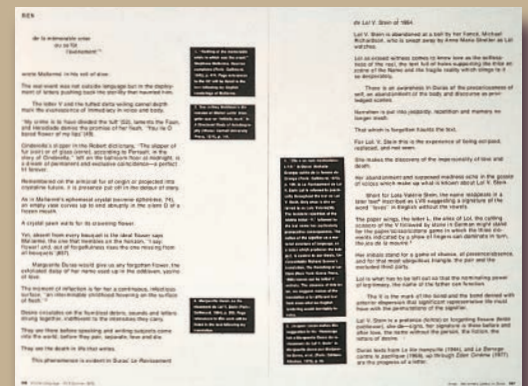


Both informational and conceptual, the verbal deconstruction of the title derives from chemical names in this exhibition poster designed for a pharmaceutical company. The deconstruction

visually treats the title type, as well as communicates the nature of the company's business. Chermayeff, Geismar & Haviv [Steff Geissbühler] / USA

In this example, a conventional text is gradually deconstructed over many pages. The designer's process of breaking apart the page form begins with the introduction of space between phrases and then between words; the verbal structure of the essay is brought into focus, while the visual clarity is decreased. The running text becomes a texture where the regularized spaces between words imply multiple reading directions.

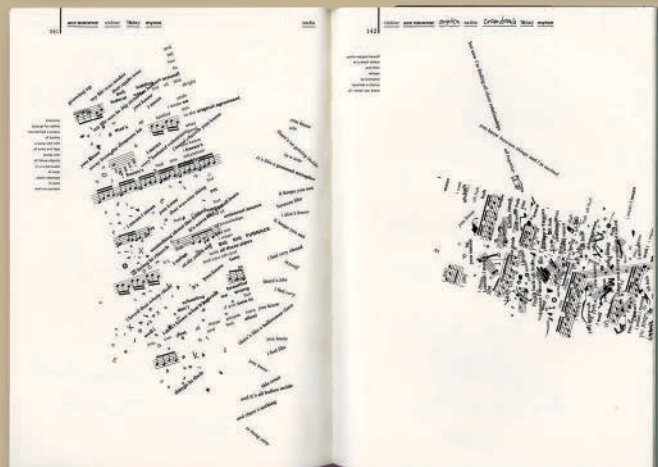
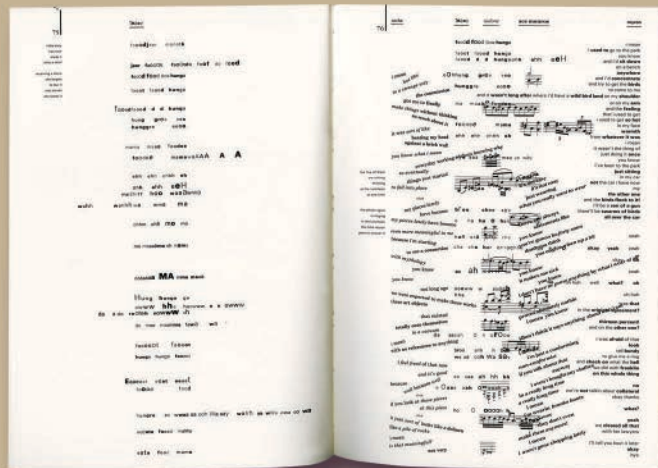
Katherine McCoy / USA



Verbal or conceptual cues within the content can be used to break a grid structure—or create a new one entirely. The natural rhythm of spoken language, for example, is often used as a guide for changing weight, size, color, or alignment among lines of type; louder or “faster” words may be set in larger or bolder type or in italics, corresponding to stresses and lulls in actual speech. Giving a “voice” to visual language can help alter the structure of a text by pushing words out of paragraphs or forcing modules or columns into relationships where the natural logic of the writing creates a visual order.

For example, treating all of the adjectives in a particular way would create a secondary structure with a rhythmic, organic quality. Breaking phrases and words apart in a running text calls attention to the individual parts of speech; the presumed reading order may begin to change for the reader. Although generally this would interfere with reading, in some cases the resulting ambiguity may be appropriate to the content of the text, yielding associations between words or images that can be used to augment and comment upon its literal meaning.





Text in this book consists of dialogue between a number of characters; the “voice” of each is coded by characterizations of typeface style, keyed to a legend running in the head margins. Conventional columns are deconstructed or violated by the

quality of the spoken dialogue—falling apart, becoming confused, or aggressively interrupting each other, depending on the flow of the dialogue.

Warren Lehrer / USA

## Our time

is a time for crossing barriers,  
for erasing old categories—  
for probing around.

When two seemingly disparate elements  
are imaginatively poised,  
put in apposition in new  
and unique ways...

... **startling discoveries**  
often result.

Our time is a time for  
**crossing**

**barriers...** for erasing  
old categories—  
for probing around.

When two seemingly disparate elements  
are imaginatively poised,  
**put in apposition**  
in new and unique ways...

**startling discoveries**  
often result.

Our time is **a time**

for **crossing** barriers,

for **erasing** old categories—

for **probing** around.

When two seemingly

**disparate** elements are imaginatively poised,  
put in **apposition**  
in new and unique ways,

startling **discoveries**  
often result.

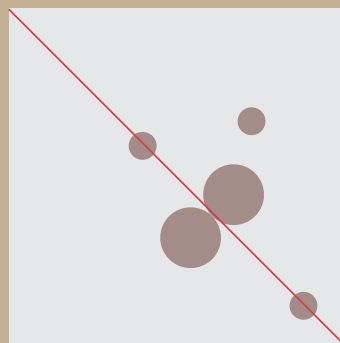
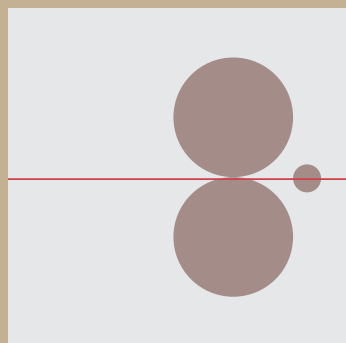
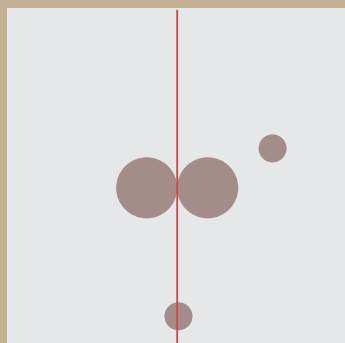
Slowly spoken phrases contrast with sharp, abrupt outbursts; repetitions of adjectives emphasize the experiential over the expository. These qualities of spoken and written language can be made visual, more than simply as a tool for clarifying hierarchy, and not just as intriguing eye candy—but to lay bare an author's methods and intent. It might even improve readability—the quality of and the degree to which the type engages its readers with the content.

The text in these examples is powerfully altered by visually deconstructing its internal parts. In the first version, size change alone affects the sense of the text's loudness, creating a crescendo.

In the second version, calling out specific parts through changes in weight, posture, width, and spacing produces a rhythmic journey—slowing down, speeding up.

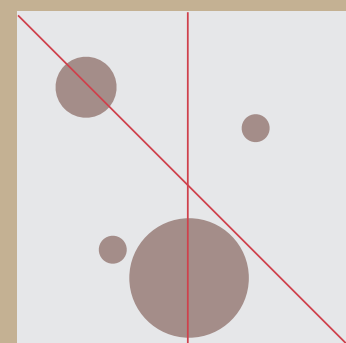
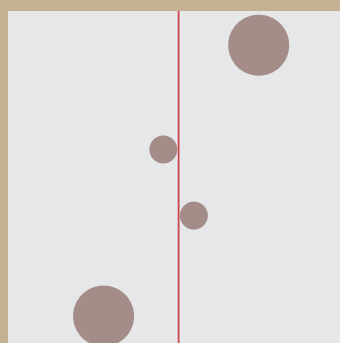
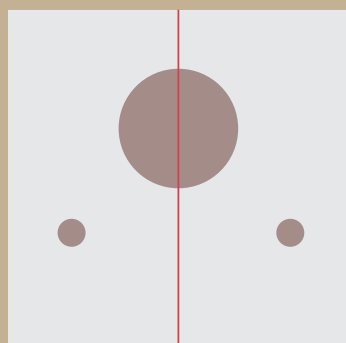
In the third version, visual changes are applied to distinguish linguistic and conceptual relationships among different parts of the text. This approach provides the added bonus of giving the reader a snapshot of the content before fully engaging the text.





Within a symmetrical composition, elements (or groups thereof) may respond to a format's vertical, horizontal, or diagonal axis (shown left to right, respectively).

Symmetry is described as bilateral (near right) if form elements' centers align with the axis, straddling it, as well as mirror each other across the axis. In rotational symmetry (middle), elements invert in their orientation relative to the axis. Arranging forms symmetrically around two axes creates greater complexity (far right).



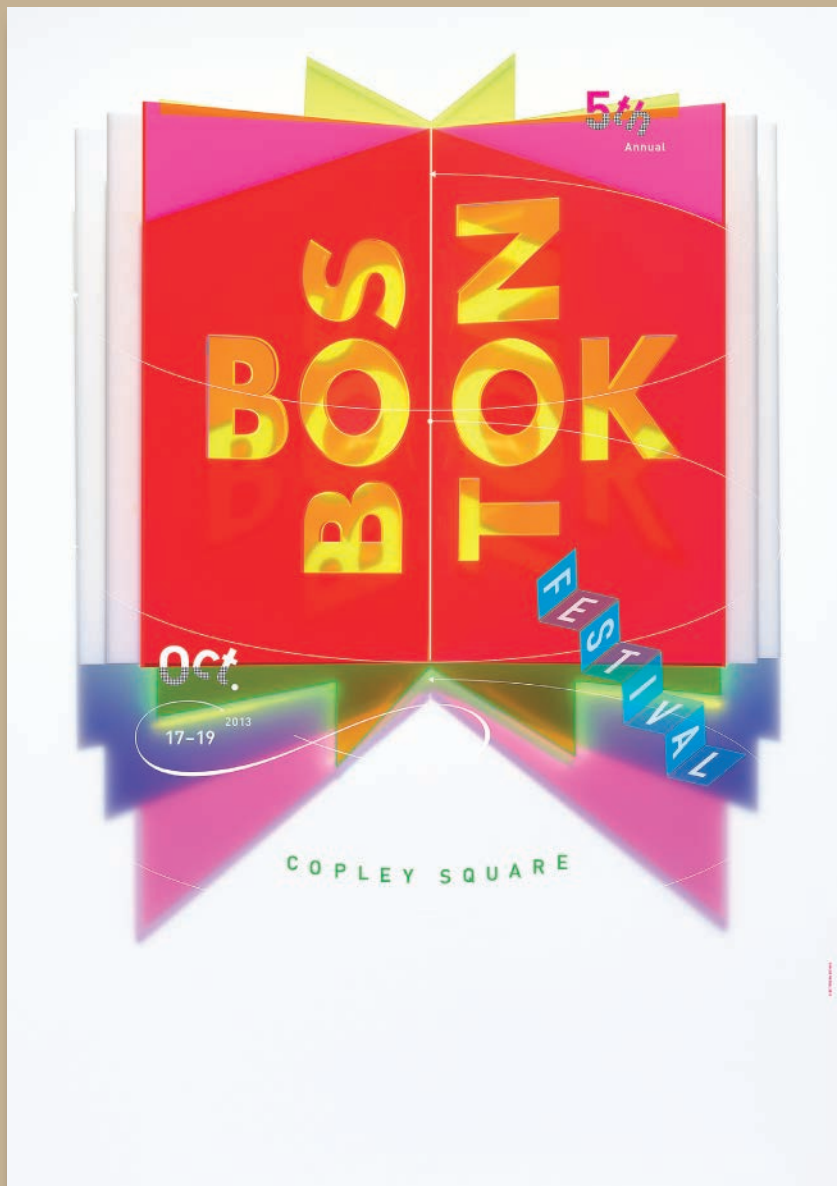
Centered-axis (symmetrical) composition is what might be termed the classical, or traditional, page architecture in which elements are arranged in response to a format's center, halfway between left and right edges or top and bottom edges (and, sometimes, in response to each others' central axes, independent of those in the format).

\_\_\_ Although material in centered layouts may be guided in its proportions or positions by a grid, centering is structurally antithetical to grid-based visualization. This is because it assumes only one governing alignment axis; because that axis is "buried" within the area

of the material, rather than marked by its contours; and because the exterior contours, widths, and depths of centered elements are mutually interdependent—not subject to predetermined intervals, but driven by their fit and relative proportion as they come into a central alignment. Elements in centered layouts stack, in sequential fashion, from top to bottom or left to right. The shapes of the elements to either side of the axis are identical, as are the shapes and intervals of negative spaces to further beyond.

\_\_\_ The primary visual result of centered-axis architecture is a sense of immediacy,

or unfussy directness, followed by what appears to be formal simplicity, as the material's quality as a unit dominates the perception of internal divisions and emphasizes the total grouping as a shape within the page or screen area.



Typographic and planar image forms in this poster primarily situate around the format's central vertical axis, although the title reads across both vertical and horizontal axes. Supporting information plays with rotational and diagonal axis symmetries.

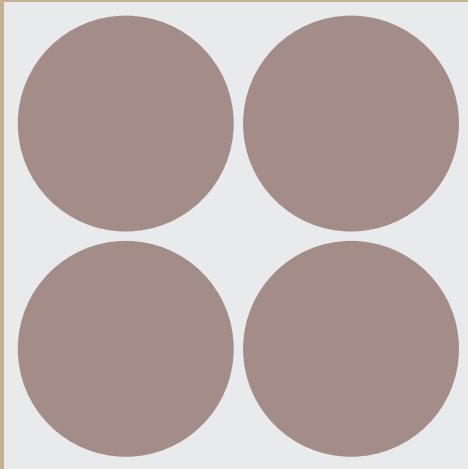
Skolos/Wedell / USA



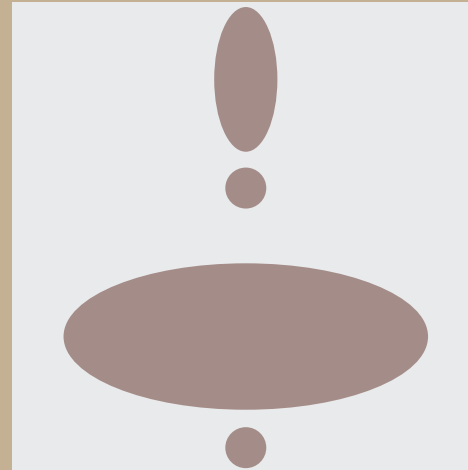
Symmetry and asymmetry rarely combine effectively, but bringing these two kinds of organizational structure into confrontation can yield interesting results, so long as the two compositional states are

distinct. Each of the two advertisements shown here initiate a tense dialogue between symmetrical and asymmetrical compositional logic.

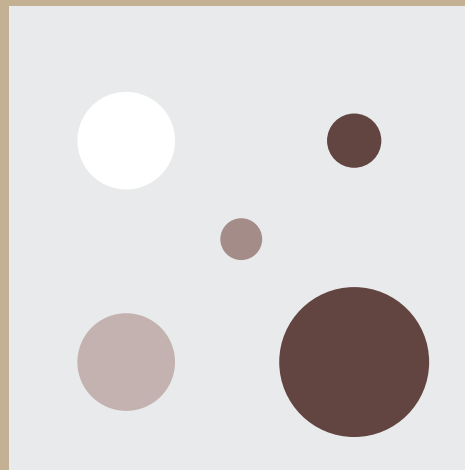
Timothy Samara / USA



When symmetrically organized forms become so large that they are clearly bigger than any remaining symmetrical spaces, their confrontation with the format becomes very tense, reducing the composition's overall static quality.



Another strategy for introducing contrast is to juxtapose dramatically different emphases in proportion, both among form elements and the spaces that separate them. It's important to define a logic of progression or alternations of shape proportions and distance intervals between them as they're distributed along the axis from beginning to end.



Radical changes in size among elements, or in their relative lightness and darkness, help enhance the illusion of deep space and, therefore, reorder their lateral movement dimensionally—that is, movement becomes perceived as also occurring from near to far.

In some ways, symmetry is unforgiving with regard to layout flexibility because it demands that all elements adhere to a single axis; those that don't typically appear disunified from the whole. The restfulness and overall uniformity that results can be problematic relative to the goals of designed communication—a viewer is likely to gloss over material and come to an intellectual rest quickly, rather than investigate a work more intently. Exaggerating contrasts in scale (or proportion) and spacing (density and rhythm) when working with symmetrical compositions is critical to ensuring optical vitality and, therefore, greater viewer engagement.



This centered-axis book spread defines a number of strong contrasts between left and right pages, as well as internally within each: geometric versus organic; vertically expansive versus inwardly clustered; and crispness versus softness in edge texture.

Sagmeister+Walsh / USA



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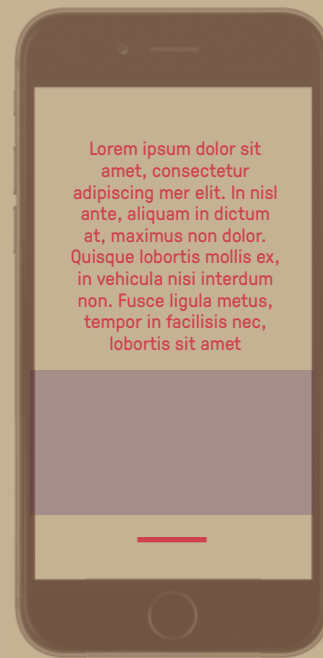
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Maintaining a logic of contrasting form widths and margin spaces is easily accomplished in a webpage displayed in the generously wide format of a desktop browser (left), but more challenging to achieve within the narrow confines of a smartphone's screen (right). Forcing text

elements to occupy a narrower-than optimal width, and introducing punctuating graphical forms, permits some of the contrast in lateral emphasis to translate into the smaller viewing area.



The designer of this cookbook spread creates a stark counterpoint between hard, geometric forms (the vertical line at left; the inset image's rectangle) and organic ones (the irregular widths and soft rag shapes of the type) for an ini-

tially broad gesture of contrast. At this level, these three primary forms (line, text column, image rectangle) also express dramatic differences in their depths and the relations of their edges to the format. Further, the type itself, as a

distinct unit, exhibits contrasts in relative sharpness, width of internal components, depth proportion, and depth interval.

Kiyoko Shiromasa / USA

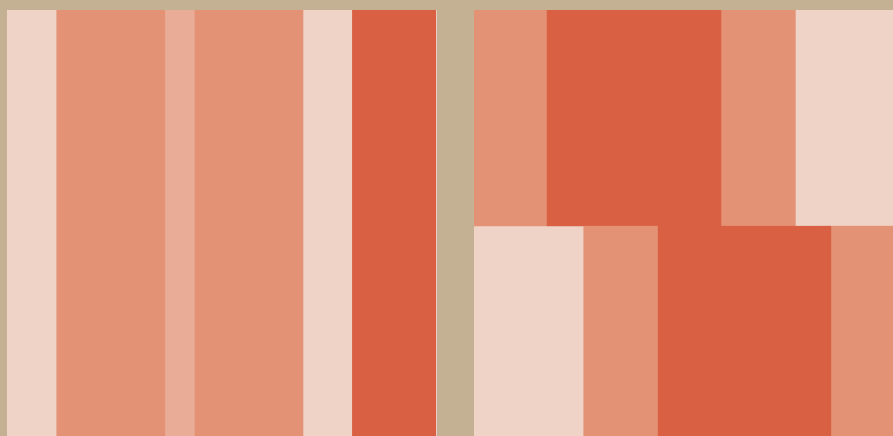
Inserting any form (even a solitary one) into a space creates structure—a set of visual relationships between its contour (the shape of its outer boundary) and axis (an imaginary line that separates its halves), and those of other forms. Because of our orientation to Earth, we typically perceive forms as expressing two primary axes—horizontal and vertical, or orthogonal—grid structure.

— But structures may be more complex than that. Nature is perhaps the most prolifically inventive “designer” of structures that have nothing to do with the orthogonal: The radial arrangement of flower petals; the

irregular axes of stars in constellations and the spirals of galaxies; the hexagonal lattices of molecules in a crystal; and the helical whorl of DNA are but a few examples of natural structures without horizontal and vertical axes, that yet express some degree of geometricity. Furthermore, any structure may be fluid and irregular in proportion or interval: simply because an arrangement presents no perceptible repetition or pattern among its parts doesn’t discredit it as a structure.

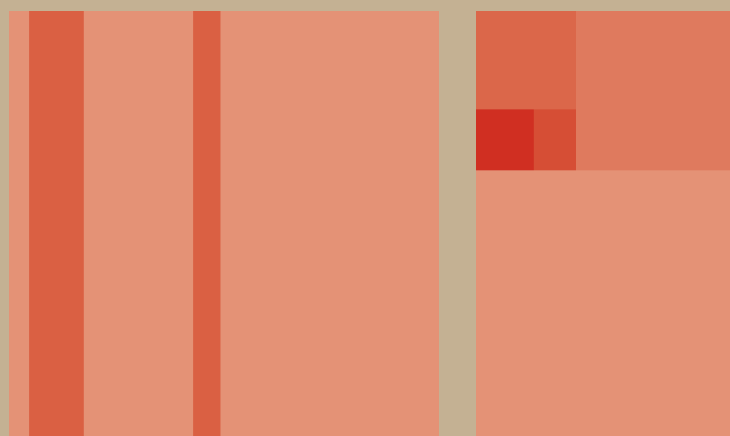
— Being completely objective, the choice of one structural approach is no more valid, on a functional level, than that of another.

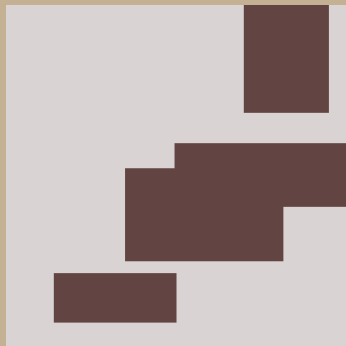
Every kind of structure will have implications for the display of content. The different qualities of each, however, will impart extremely different perceptions of content and, therefore, of its meaning—especially if that structure is one a viewer is likely to associate with some concrete experience. If an arrangement is structured like a tree, for instance, the viewer will interpret it as a tree. Designers must still confront the issue of a structure’s relevance on a communicative level.



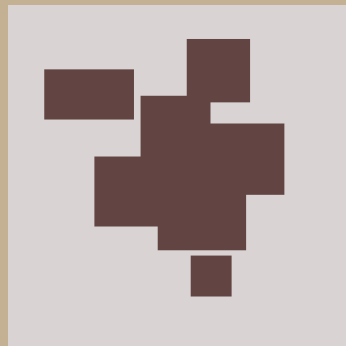
The intervals between musical notes or chords—the octave established by the seven unique tonal pitches in Western music—have been used by book designers to create page divisions since the Middle Ages. Similarly to pitch intervals, rhythmic or thematic alternation methods used for structuring musical compositions can be applied to the distances between elements in a layout: A/B/A, for example, or A/B/A/C, in which A is one measurement, B another, and so on.

Any numeric progression or fractional relationship can be a starting point for creating spatial divisions—odd-number ratios (1:3:5:7), for example, as shown in the first example. A thirteenth-century Italian mathematician, Leonardo Fibonacci, discovered a natural progression of numbers in which each number is the sum of the preceding two—for example, 1:1:2:3:5:8:13:21:34, and so on. Coincidentally, this same proportional relationship is what drives the Golden Section.

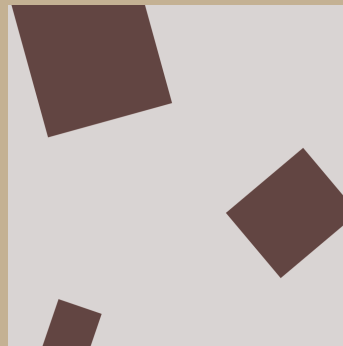




**Stepping**

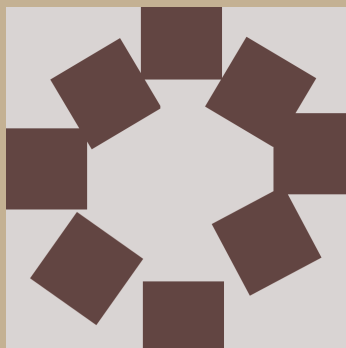


**Clustering**



**Rotational**

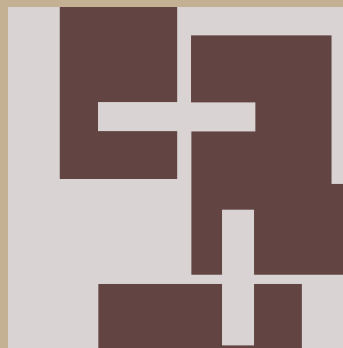
There are numerous compositional structures that vary between geometric and organic, rigid and irregular. These structural approaches are by no means comprehensive, nor must they be used independently of each other; combining different kinds of structural approach offers the designer infinite possibilities for organizing content and adding new levels of meaning.



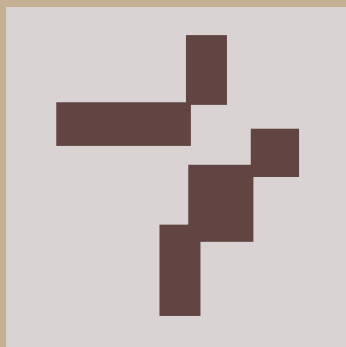
**Radial**



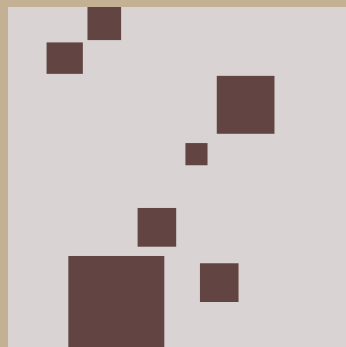
**Concentric/Nested**



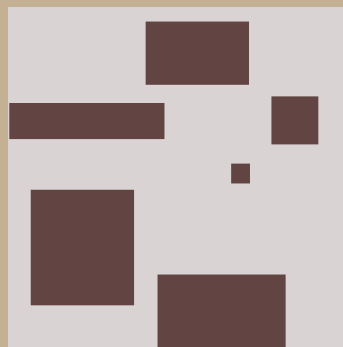
**Networked**



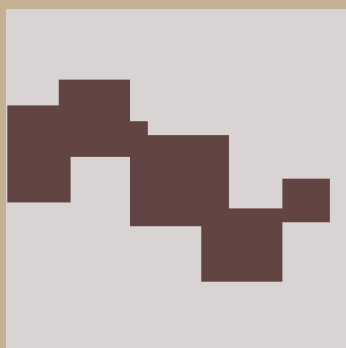
**Branching**



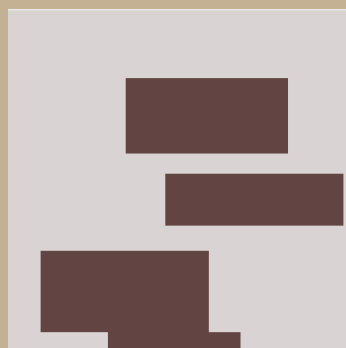
**Constellational**



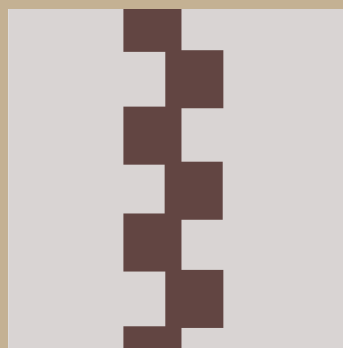
**Spiraling**



**Waving/Arcing**



**Staggering**



**Chaining/Helical**



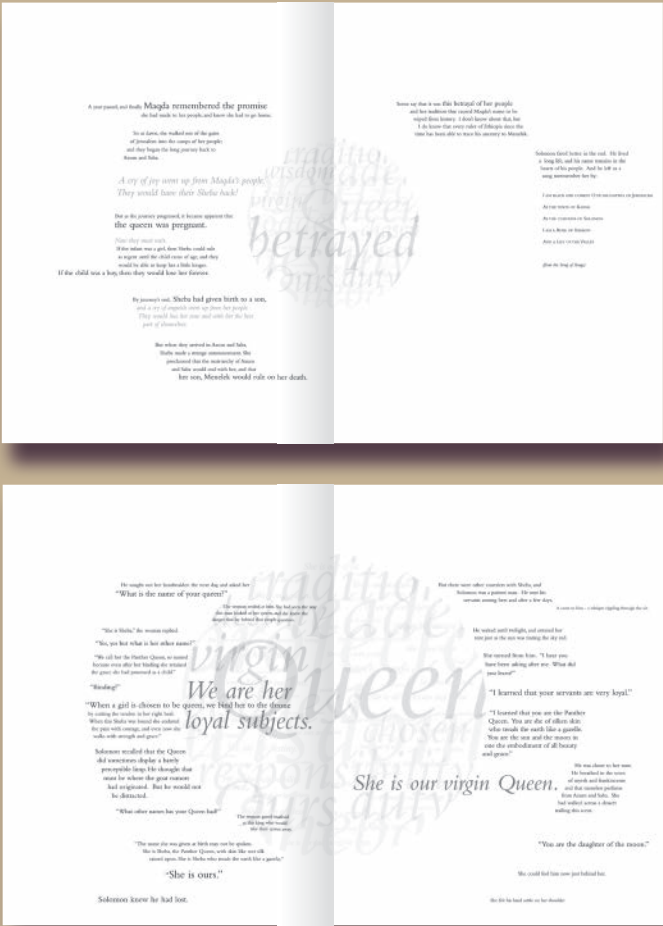
Alternative Architectures

Other Kinds of Geometric Structure

This design for a science center's donor wall focuses on a relevant, universal scientific concept—fractal structure—a natural phenomenon and mathematical set consisting of

complex, infinite patterns exhibiting self-similarity displayed at all scales.

Poulin+Morris / USA



The visual representation of this spoken story is organized on a structure of concentric circular fields. The choice of the circle is conceptual, representing the cyclical aspect of life and the outward movement of the sound of a speaker's voice. The text moves around the outside of the primary circle that defines the spreads. As key phrases or words are delivered, they move into and through the circle, becoming augmented in size and motion. Sub-

sequent text overlays previous text, giving continuity to the parts. The concentric rings create columns that are still visible, and which provide the same function as their conventional counterparts, separating thoughts and organizing passages into distinct parcels of information for accessibility.

Julie Saunders Carlini / USA



# phym

philadelphia festival  
of young musicians

Please join us in celebrating the accomplishments of our students and music education in Philadelphia by attending the performance of the 11th Annual Philadelphia Festival of Young Musicians. This year, The Philadelphia Orchestra and Kimmel Center for the Performing Arts have provided the wonderful opportunity for students to rehearse and perform in a premier cultural venue for Philadelphia. Hosted by Ulisse Waplington, CMS 3 Teacher of Excellence, the festival will culminate in a combined orchestral and choral performance of more than 250 students and teachers.

Monday, February 16, 2015 - 8:00 p.m.  
Verizon Hall, Kimmel Center for the Performing Arts

FREE ADMISSION

## philadelphia festival of young musicians

Through the collaboration of thirteen Philadelphia-based music organizations, the Philadelphia Festival of Young Musicians will provide a unique musical experience for participating students from throughout the city and surrounding suburbs. It will seek to construct an environment conducive to creative expression and learning for each of the students.

We hold the expectation that participation in the Philadelphia Festival of Young Musicians will inspire lasting artistic, social and educational experiences that will advance students in their lives personally and musically.

[www.pyms.org/phym](http://www.pyms.org/phym)

### participating organizations

- Arteses y Músicas Latino Americanas (AMLA)
- Kimmel Center for the Performing Arts
- Musicopolis
- Pennsylvanian Children and Keystone State Boychoir
- Philadelphia Boys Choir
- The Philadelphia Orchestra
- Philadelphia Sinfonia Association
- Philadelphia Youth Orchestra & Turn Up Philly
- Play On, Philly!
- School District of Philadelphia
- Softwood Music School
- Silver Cities Girlschoir
- Temple University Music Preparatory Division

This invitation to attend performances in a youth orchestra festival organizes information in a diagonal structure that is no less clear than it would have been if ordered by a grid, and no less direct than had it been organized symmetrically—but ever more memorable as a result of its unexpected structure.

Paone Design Associates / USA



The apparent complexity of the typography in the page spread, opposite, belies a simple, underlying geometric structure: vertical lines of differing widths and depths.

Designer unknown;  
Timothy Samara / USA,  
Instructor



A triangular formation of intersecting lines establishes a recognizably consistent, yet flexible, underpinning for the visual identity of a student art organization ("Studio of Light"). Correct reading sequence depends on careful application of darker color and less-rotated orientation to the first of the three words.

Niessen & deVries / Netherlands

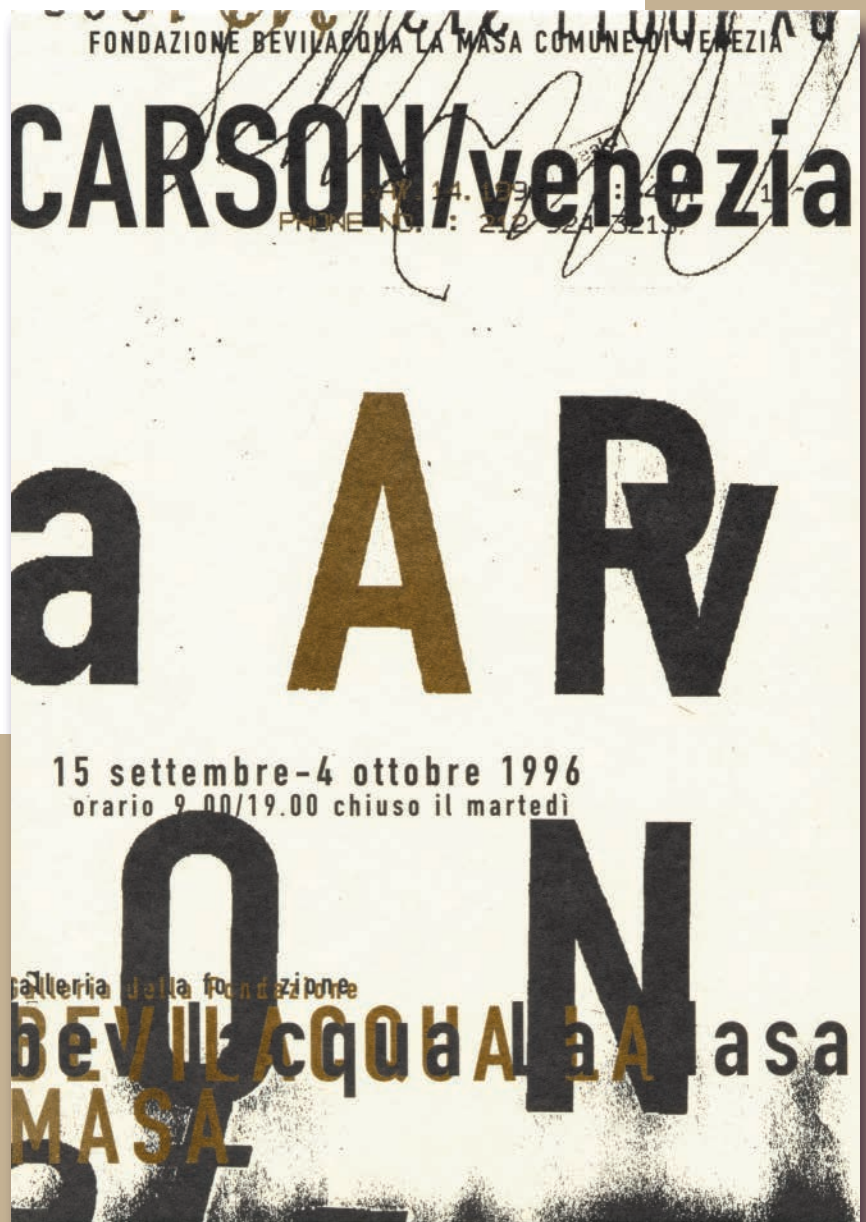
## Intuitive, Relational, and Conceptual

As an antidote to structure, which implies analytical intent, designers may determine that spontaneous approaches are more relevant for the task at hand—working by the seat of their pants, as it were, and allowing purely formal instincts to supercede the rational. Equally liberating are strategies that depend on chance for their results, as are those that source their visual arrangements in the metaphorical aspects of visual storytelling.

The vigorous composition of this poster defies the rational approach of structural thinking. A loose structure is implied by the horizontal linear divisions created by secondary type, but otherwise the layout is entirely intuitive. Its strength, however, lies in this dynamic, instinctive positioning and treatment of

forms. The raw texture of the letters and background, the overlapping of forms that refer to the legible information create a kinetic experience that is both filmic and reminiscent of tattered street posters.

David Carson / USA





Exercises in spontaneity need not result in lavishly complex, densely layered, or unusually challenging spatial ambiguity. The relationships among photographic and typographic elements in these book spreads, although entirely intuitive in their arrangement, nonetheless present complex information in a quiet, lyrical rhythm that is easily digestible.

Timothy Samara / USA



This compositional method can be described as the intuitive placement of material based on its formal aspects: seeing inherent visual relationships within the material and making connections for the viewer based on those relationships. Designers often will use this method as a step in the process of building a grid, but its use as an organizational idea on its own is just as valid.

— This approach starts fast and loose: The designer works with the material much like a painter does, making quick decisions as the material is put together and the relationships are first seen. As the different optical

qualities of the elements begin to interact, the designer can determine which qualities are affected by those initial decisions and make adjustments to enhance or negate the qualities in whatever way is most appropriate for the communication.

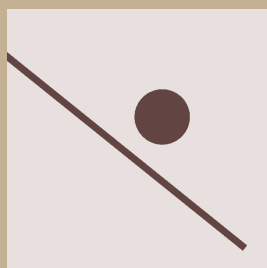
— The method's inherent liveliness has an affinity with collage; its sense of immediacy and directness can be very inviting to viewers, providing them with a simple and gratifying experience that is very accessible.

Creating areas of differing presence or quality—what is known as “contrast”—is crucial; it's what imparts vitality and ensures that viewers remain engaged as they analyze the varieties of visual opposition with which the designer confronts them. There are perhaps hundreds of individual kinds of contrasting relationships a designer may integrate within a single format space, the range of which is merely hinted at in the illustrations shown opposite.

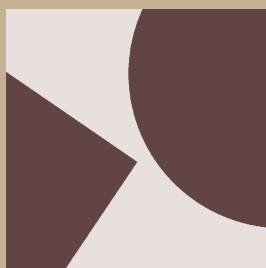
The organization of material in this journal cover is optical and intuitive. Deteriorating fields of type where the disintegration has emphasized its flat, textural rhythm contrast a deep, ambiguous space created by softly textural shadow forms. Sharp, inset photographs with clear depth of field contrast with the indistinct background and, in concert with the two primary headlines, offset the verticality of the two side-by-side images with lateral horizontal and diagonal movement.

Dan Boyarski / USA

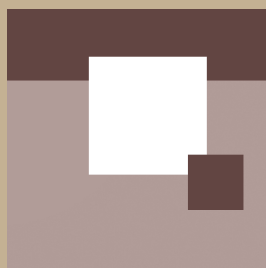




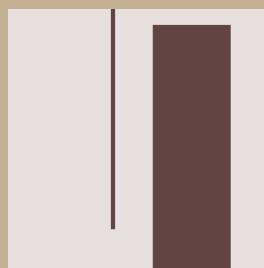
**Dot/Line**



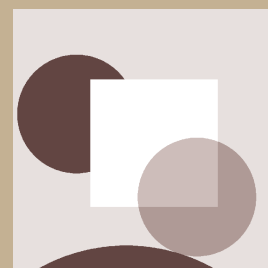
**Curve/Angle**



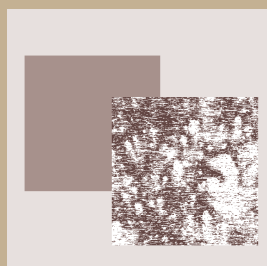
**Light/Dark**



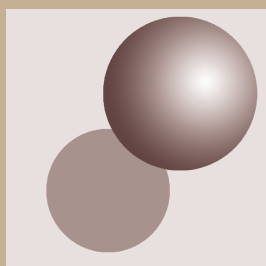
**Thin/Thick**



**Opaque/Transparent**



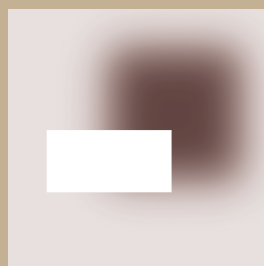
**Flat/Textural**



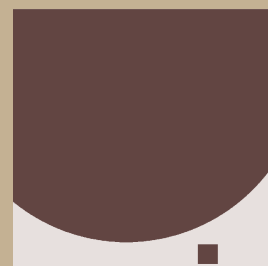
**Planar/Volumetric**



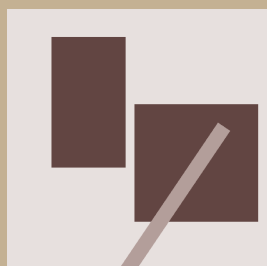
**Geometric/Organic**



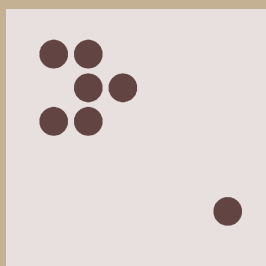
**Hard/Soft**



**Large/Small**



**Orthogonal/Diagonal**



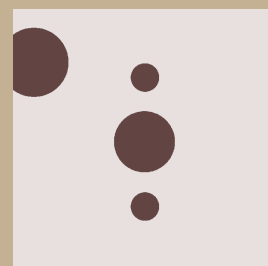
**Grouped/Separated**



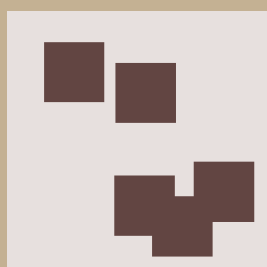
**Active/Restful**



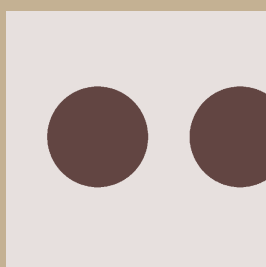
**Simple/Complex**



**Symmetrical/Asymmetrical**



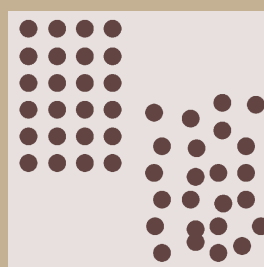
**Adjacent/Overlapping**



**Inset/Bleeding**



**Parallel/Divergent**



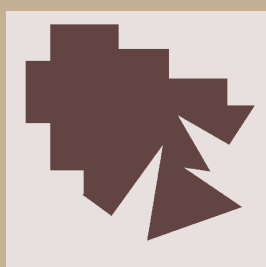
**Ordered/Disordered**



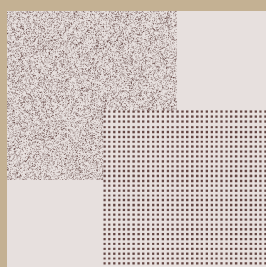
**Continuous/Interrupted**



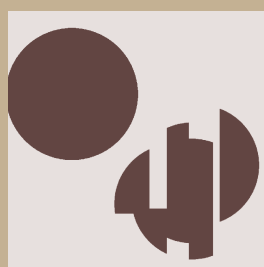
**Compressed/Expanded**



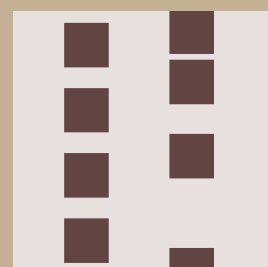
**Uniform/Differentiated**



**Textured/Patterned**



**Solid/Fragmented**



**Regular/Irregular**



Intuitive, Relational,  
and Conceptual

Spontaneous Composition



Patterned arrangements  
of pattern elements—stripes,  
steps, bricks, frames, grid  
clusters—invade and dissect  
each other across shifting  
positive and negative planes.  
Steff Geissbühler / USA



Following linguistic  
deconstructions to  
visualize a vocal journey  
through a poem, changes  
in typographic scale and  
texture are intuitively  
balanced across the for-  
mat: geometric stepping  
and orthogonal, linear  
structures confront  
rotated and diagonal  
ones at differing scales,  
in different locations, to  
highlight their contrast-  
ing qualities while ensur-  
ing that these are always  
in dialogue throughout  
the space.

Young Kim / USA



Angular and linear type  
forms in step-like, or-  
thogonal arrangements  
provide visual connec-  
tive tissue between  
soft, irregular fields of  
color that are distributed  
organically around the  
perimeter of this poster's  
format area.

David Carson / USA

The dynamic arrangement of tumbling inset images, graphical planes of intense color, diagrams, and paragraphs of text lends a playful, kinetic quality to this agenda booklet. The initial appearance of randomness slowly gives way to a variety of axis intersections and directional emphases

established by the edges of the rectilinear forms, which "point" to each other across the pages. Careful attention to color and value differences among the elements orders them spatially such that each alternately advances or recedes in a recognizable sequence.

Niessen & deVries / Netherlands





# Intuitive, Relational, and Conceptual Imagery as a Source

A designer's focus during the process of laying out content is often concerned with typography, whether related to organizing extensive text for reading or visually integrating typographic gestures with image material. Bringing these two kinds of visual form together is notoriously challenging: each has its own formal characteristics that are most often at odds with the other, and it is often assumed that the two should be mutually dominant and referential. But what happens if the visual aspects of imagery are allowed to rule, so to speak—to determine not only the compositional structure of a project overall,

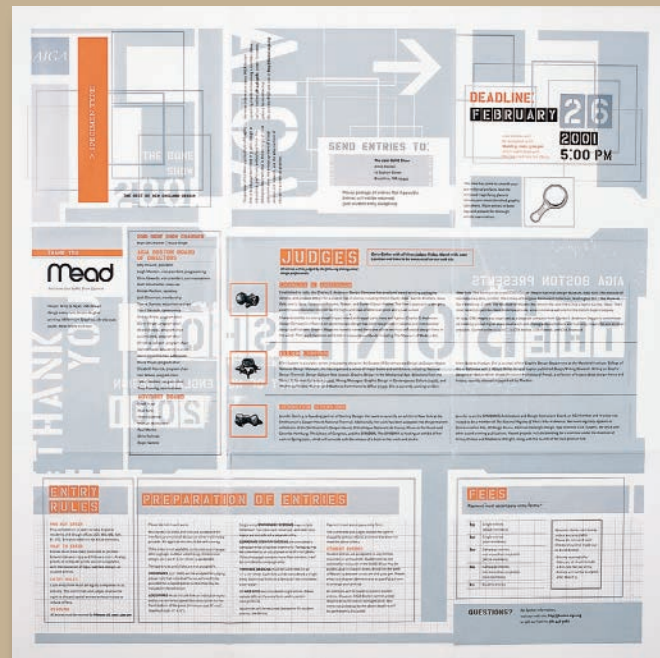
but the compositional and stylistic attributes of the type? As a source for organization and typographic integration, looking to the imagery as primary inspiration can offer yet another strategy for developing layouts.

— Typography is always a pattern of lines, but images present a radically greater range of form languages that, when applied to text, can quickly relieve a designer of presumptions about how text should behave in a layout, or how layouts themselves ought to be organized. Driving compositional decisions based primarily on imagery can take two basic directions: First, in which typographic elements

become, in essence, part of the imagery; and second, in which the imagery sets up the logic for how type responds to imagery in a pictorial way while retaining its identity as a separate entity alongside images.



The titling and text typography in this exhibition poster are composed and styled to become one with the field of forensic bone images—cut and pasted together

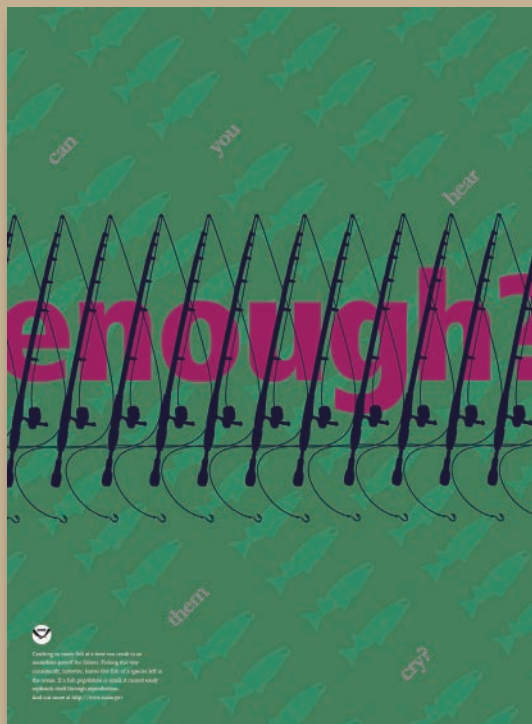


as specimens and notations photographed on a copy-camera positioning platform as is used to record items found in archaeological digs. Transparency,

overlapped edges and borders, and misaligned grids within the imagery inform font choices and their treatments, as well as force text into rectangular cut-out

areas that appear grid-based at first, but really aren't. Kristin Hughes [with Ink Design] / USA





**Transformations to a neutral icon (a fishing rod) serve as the primary source for the compositions of these posters about overfishing:**

**At top left, the regular, overlapping repetition of icons suggests excessive human activity; the title “Enough?” is caught behind it.**

At upper right, the icon is invaded by organisms, a reference to algae infestation; the title's color connects its meaning to that of the icon, while its position is a response to that of the title in the first poster.

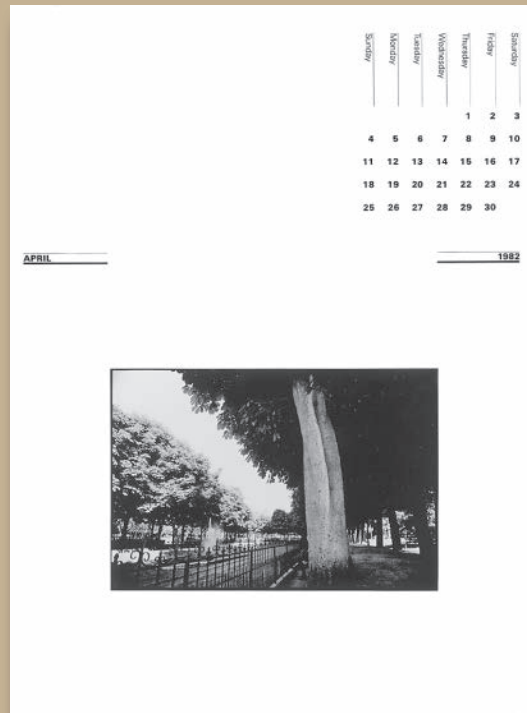
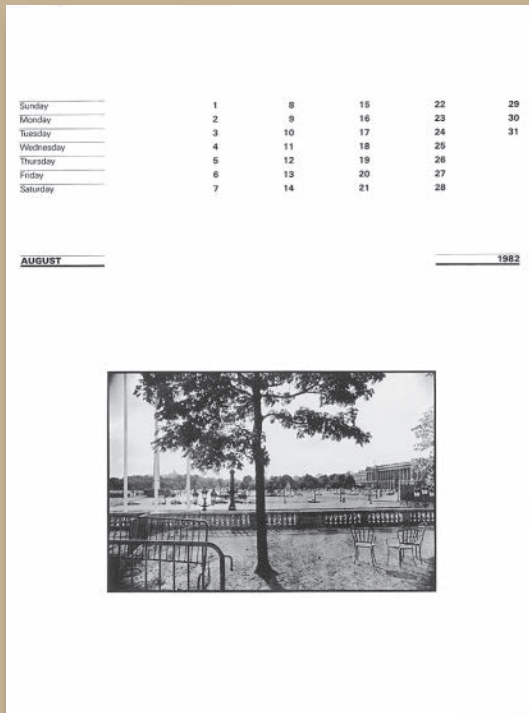


In the poster at lower left, an oozing form suggestive of pollution obscures the icon, overwhelming it and, so too, the word "invade."

In the series' summary poster, lower right, the broken forms of the icon, reminiscent of bones, is restated by the title, "too late."

Eri Kuwada / Japan

# Intuitive, Relational, and Conceptual Imagery as a Source

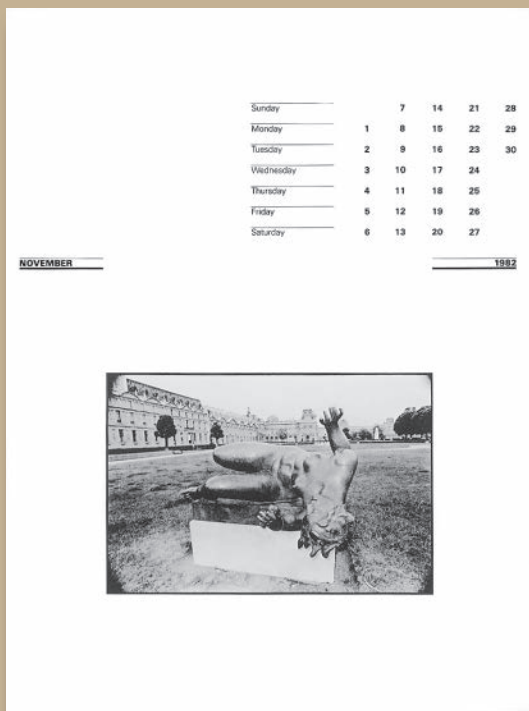


In this selection of pages from a promotional calendar, a subtle, organic logic creates variation in the matrix that orders each month's weekdays and date numerals.

Each photograph presents a different set of formal conditions: a presence of strong vertical forms or lack thereof; variations in the position of the horizon line; vertical alignments of high-contrast details or a grouping of horizontal spatial divisions; the concentration of a dark mass at one corner or another; and so on.

In response to each image, the calendar grid changes in three ways—in width, depth, and in the weekday list's orientation relative to the date matrix. These simple alterations result in variations of typographic density, interval, and vertical/horizontal emphasis—as well as axis relationships—that establish specific compositional relationships with each respective image.

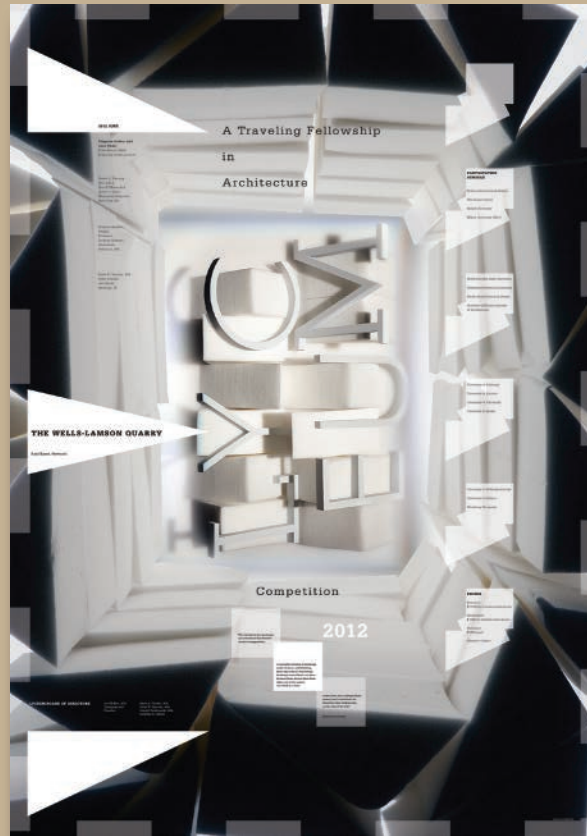
Willi Kunz Studio / USA







## Pictorialization and Metaphorical Allusion



Each poster exhibits a different allusive strategy:

The faculty exhibition poster at far left configures image and text elements into the form of a double helix, a metaphorical reference to the generative aspects of art and education.

The poster immediately to the left, which announces an architectural fellowship, builds an image of type in a multi-level space, accented by cut-out blocks, that pictorializes the site to which it refers: a stone quarry.

Skolos/Wedell / USA

An exceptionally interesting way of creating compositions is to visualize an idea embedded in the project's content as a compositional structure within the space of page or screen.

\_\_\_ One possible result may be a narrative pictorialization in which the layout and its parts are made to "look like" something discussed in the text: For example, the organization of elements within a space may generate the impression of objects swept up in a flood; or, perhaps, they may be organized so as to construct a literal image of a car or other machine. In simplest terms, the layout

becomes a kind of illustration. As content progresses or pursues a different direction from page to page or screen to screen, the "subject" depicted by the layout changes, but the governing logic remains the same.

\_\_\_ Alternatively, the layout structure and visual language used for the forms that it arranges may allude to some tangential idea, acting as a metaphor that supports or manipulates perception of its meaning: For instance, a promotion for a film festival might splice repeated images to refer to the idea of film editing.

\_\_\_ Both variations on this method follow

the idea of visual storytelling, relying on depictive strategies to deliver narrative meaning that either helps describe or reframes and augments the content.



Cropping fashion models' figures into narrow vertical strips creates a rapid-fire, rhythmic presentation that suggests the continuous *snap-snap-snap* of motor-drive photography and emphasizes a kind of stomping motion associated with the way models walk during a fashion show.

The layout also refers to photo-editing; the strips can be interpreted as the edges of selected shots peeking out from a pile, to be sifted through before making a final cut for publication.

Niessen & deVries / Netherlands

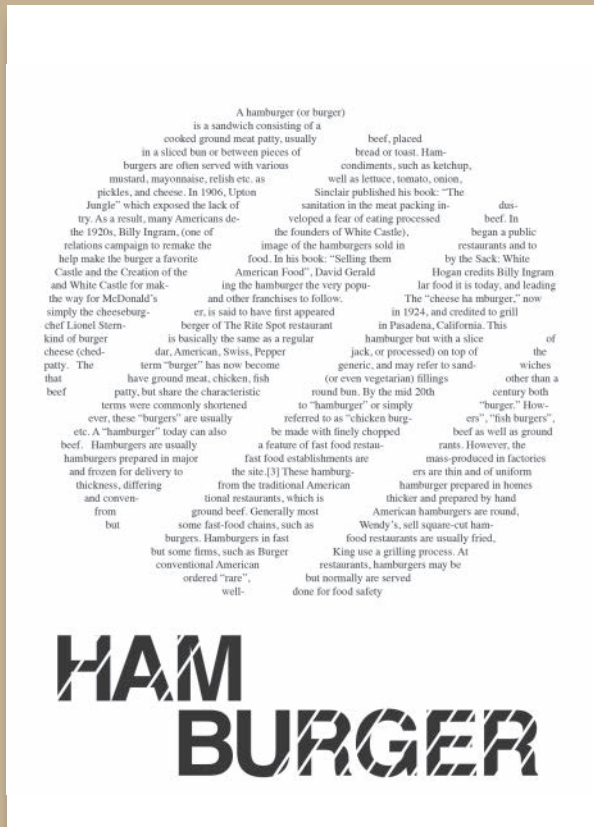
A personal narrative about a near-death incident begins with a straight-forward column structure that is deconstructed in successive studies to evoke the motion of floodwaters and the desperate nature of the situation.

Le Van Ho / USA





## Vernacularism



This study for a poster about the history of the hamburger configures text into a shape that refers to an everyday truth about its subject

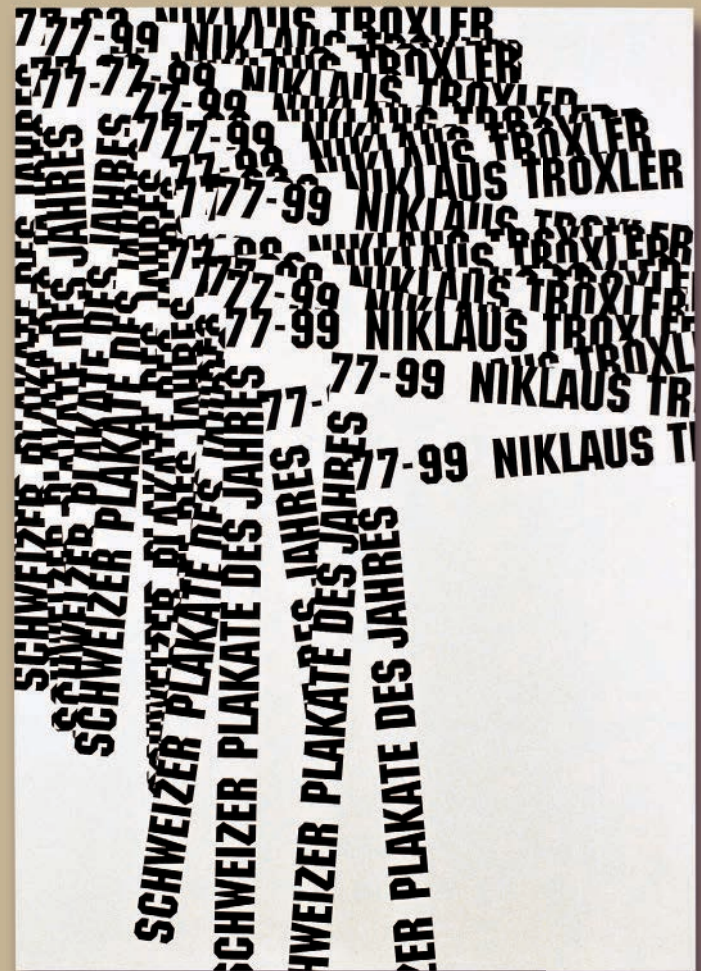
with which most people who grill hamburgers are familiar.

Designer unknown;  
Timothy Samara / USA,  
Instructor

Another kind of allusive strategy is to appropriate visual language associated with common, everyday experiences or stylistic gestures associated with particular contexts—what is called the vernacular.

Using vernacular imagery or a vernacular compositional conceit imposes the look of something else onto a communication, embedding it in this new context, either to draw a comparison or, possibly, to comment on the subject being communicated: for example, designing an invitation to an exclusive art auction using brush lettering and graphic devices typically seen in supermarket adver-

tising banners. Because the word “vernacular” refers to that which is ordinary, gestures of this kind often trade on forms associated with low culture, or undesigned visual experiences. Vernacularism has a relatively long history, with its source in Pop Art; the iconic sculpture of Brillo brand laundry detergent boxes by Andy Warhol, as well as paintings of spaghetti and household cleaning products by James Rosenquist, produced in the 1960s, are prime examples.



Initially aligning this poster's type along the edges creates the appearance of an internal poster format; by repeating it ad hoc on top of itself, the designer evokes the vernacular of street postings, where many layers of posters build up on top of

each other over time. This simple strategy elevates the communication to a sophisticated level where the image becomes signifier and signified, a poster that shows a posting of posters.

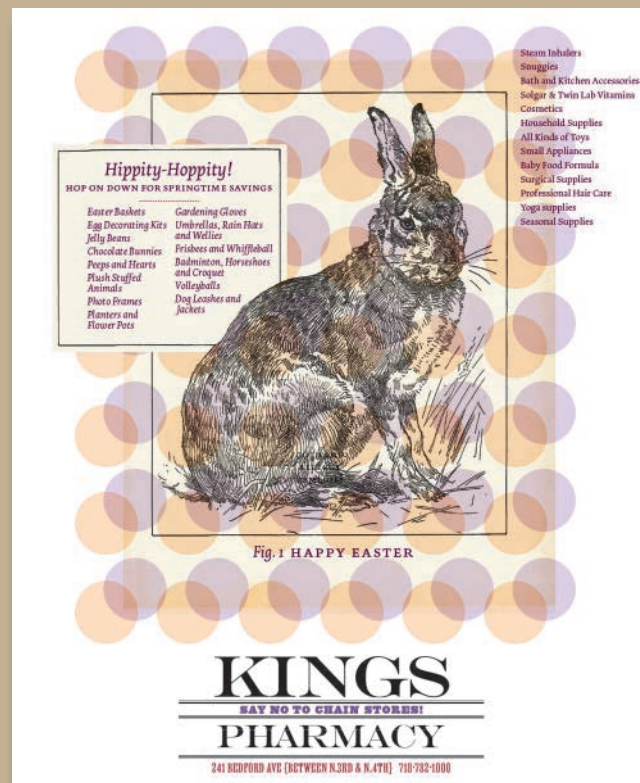
Niklaus Troxler Design /  
Switzerland



Eri Kuwada / Japan

Jessica Berardi / USA

Timothy Samara / USA



## Random Physical Effect

Ripping with eyes  
closed

Moving camera  
during exposure

Selecting adjectives  
in a text and aligning  
them for remaining  
text to follow

Throwing paint from  
a distance

Piecing together  
behind one's back

Changing point sizes  
of type with eyes  
closed

Cutting and splicing  
from the back without  
seeing the front

Curling a printed  
layout to photograph  
as a new layout

Arbitrarily changing  
crop shape from square  
to circle  
Moving a subject  
around on a scanner  
while scanning

Moving every the left  
element by a predetermined  
measurement

Folding with eyes  
closed and laying out  
to follow the folds

Replacing parts on a  
board and shaking  
Scattering or  
dropping from a  
height

Shown here is a  
“list” of possibilities  
for random-effect  
chance operations...  
Randomly dropped  
onto this page's  
layout. In the back-  
ground is an image  
of another such  
operation: A text  
sliced into strips and  
woven together.

The use of chance as an organizing principal might seem counterintuitive. The unpredictable results, however, can often aid in communication from a conceptual standpoint by bringing out juxtapositions of material that might otherwise have escaped notice. Sometimes, introducing chance into the design process helps one to see the material more clearly, resulting in less predictable, yet more illuminating, solutions.

\_\_\_ Conducting a chance operation implies that the chance is being controlled to a certain degree, and this is usually the case. The nature of that control falls into two

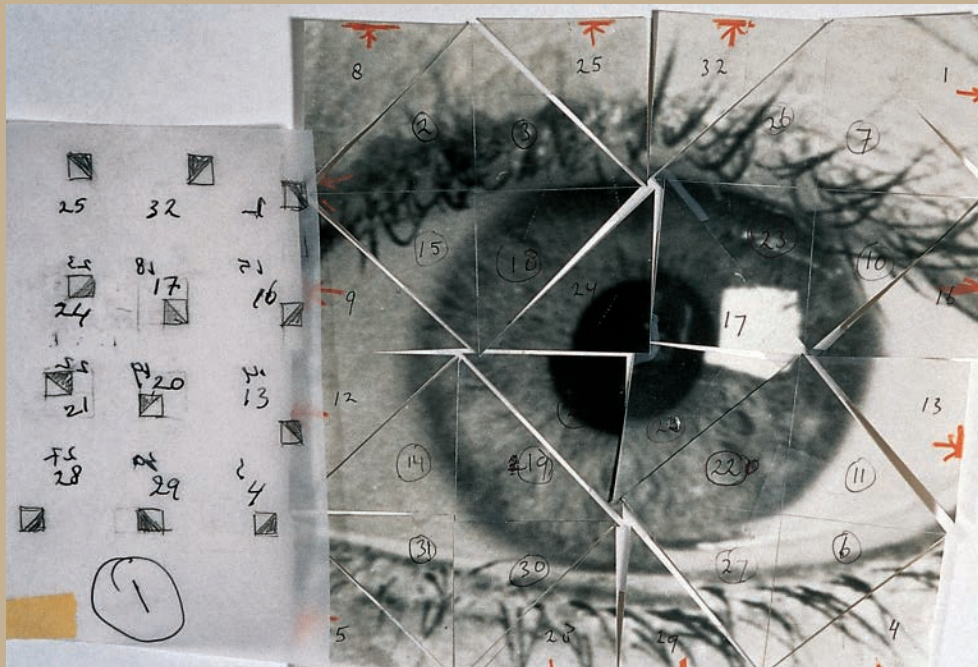
categories: The first involves randomness to a greater degree—based on an action that prevents explicit control of the outcome. A designer might fling paint at a surface, knowing that certain kinds of patterns will occur because of the size of the brush or the specific gesture; in a similar operation, cropped images might be physically scattered or dropped from a certain height over a format, with an understanding of what might result. In neither case, however, can the designer predict or effect a specific result.

\_\_\_ The resulting outcomes of such operations could be useful in communicating ideas

about motion, the unpredictability of nature, absurdity, and so on. By selecting the type of chance operation to use, a designer can skew the results in their favor to some degree, ensuring appropriateness in the form while allowing the unpredictability to create new visual relationships that structured thinking about layout won't achieve.

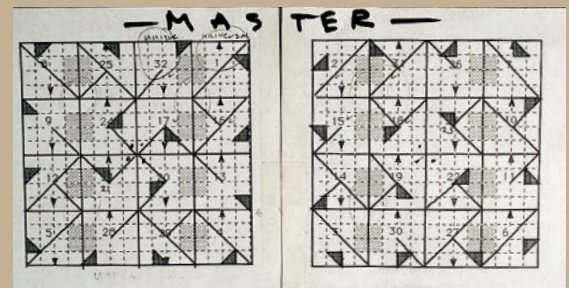


## Programmatic Effect



A master grid orchestrates the dissection of an image across multiple pages of a book. The decisions about where the dissection takes place are made arbitrarily, without regard to the composition within the image itself. Furthermore, a formula for where to place the dissected pieces in the page sequence is predetermined but, again, without knowing what the results will be in advance.

Thomas Ockerse / USA



Chance operations that make use of planned procedures, usually of the mechanical or mathematical variety, fall into a second category. Similar to those accomplished via random physical action, programmatic operations deny a designer explicit control over their eventual outcomes; however, the mechanical nature of such procedures guarantees greater foreknowledge of the results.

— Programmed chance operations might include such procedures as: dissecting an image in a pattern of intervals based on an arbitrarily applied grid or a mathematical formula; automatically photographing or

scanning elements, or a layout in progress, from a particular viewpoint at predetermined times, to insert as images; augmenting the point sizes of successive lines of type by some arbitrary multiplier; or printing two layouts on top of one another, then deleting instances where elements overlap.



## Considering the Practical in the Impractical

Often, the factor that dissuades a designer from pursuing an unconventional layout approach is the challenge it's perceived as posing for viewers, whether one of aesthetic discomfort or one that is more utilitarian, such as being too difficult to navigate. Many might argue that the goal of usability necessarily precludes the varieties of approach described here. But, why deny the potential of an unusual solution for the reason that it's not functional... Yet?

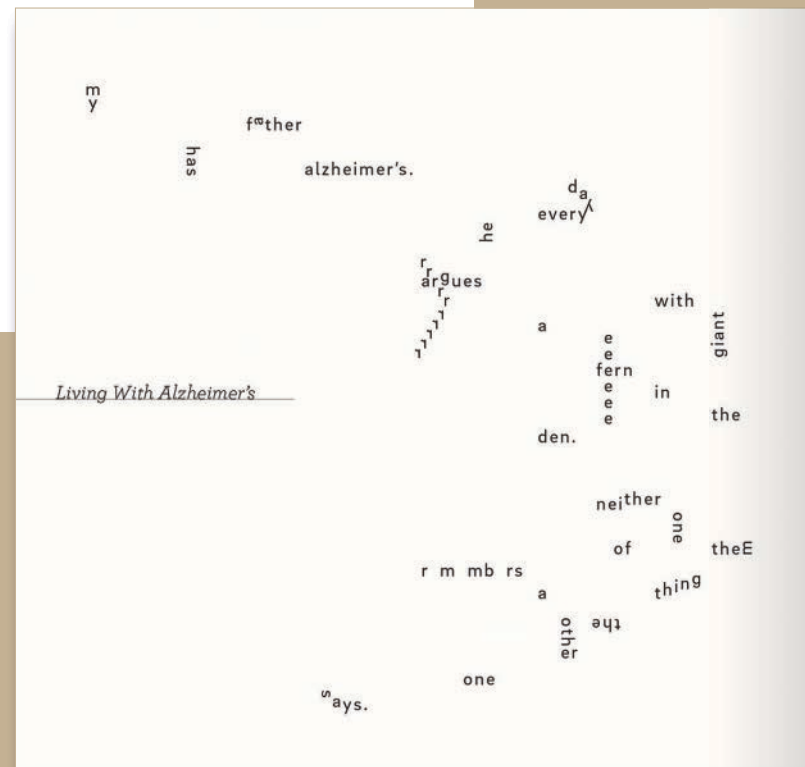
Any approach that flies in the face of convention will be fraught with difficulties. By objectively identifying problematic aspects and

working to address them with a little common sense, even the most challenging solution may be resolved to achieve a necessary level of practicality—without necessarily diluting its inventiveness.

This spread from a book of concrete poems mitigates reading-sequence difficulties first by positioning each poem's title such that it directs readers to the conventional location for text to start—upward and to the left. Once the reader enters the text from this familiar starting point,

thoughtful attention to the proximities of sequential words and phrases ensures their ability to navigate unexpected orientations of text, changes in spacing, and other obstacles.

Warren Lehrer / USA  
Poems by Dan Bernstein



Tenazas Design / USA



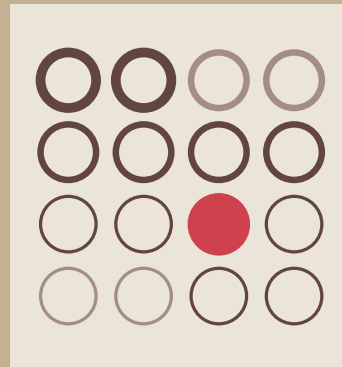
All of the means of constructing a clear hierarchy in a grid-based layout remain the same when trying to do so in a layout based on some alternative approach; there's no reason why an unusual composition can't also be a friendly one. The two aspects of hierarchic control that deserve the most attention—and which tend, most often, to be the root of viewers' navigation trouble in unusual circumstances—are those of optical differentiation and “eye path,” or compositional flow. \_\_\_\_ Ensuring that a reader can easily identify the most important elements, or those from which a sequence originates, is critical.

Bigger and bolder usually means “seen first,” so applying such differences to greater extremes than one normally would is a useful strategy. Repeating partially obscured information in an open area may help, but it may also confuse a viewer with its redundancy—better to give it a little extra room where it appears in sequence. When in doubt, simplify: if the same visual effect can be achieved with fewer elements or less interference, it will differentiate itself more efficiently from within a complicated field. \_\_\_\_ *Where* the first, or most important, form element is located, and how it optically

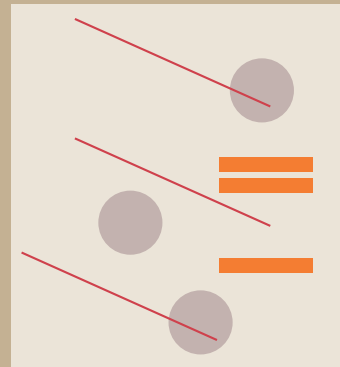
connects a viewer to elements that follow it, are equally important. For Western readers, it's wise to orient top-level elements toward the left-hand area of a layout. Elements to be encountered next must differentiate from their contexts to a similar degree (like things attract attention) or be positioned in proximity to the place where the viewer's eye is likely to leave the first element behind. Inserting graphical markers or anchoring points into a layout at strategic locations will help focus attention and direct the eye's flow to enhance both of these hierarchic aspects.



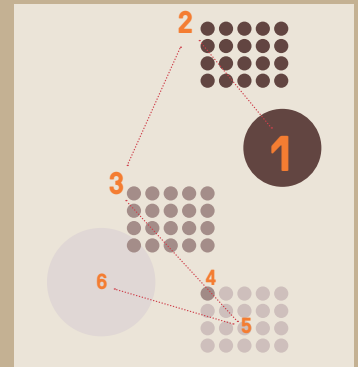
**Contrast in relative size (large versus small) and relative spacing (or density and openness) account for the most effective ways to establish a clear hierarchy. These two contrasts, as expressions of purely positive/negative interaction, affect our sense of the format being divided into darker and lighter areas. This effect is enhanced through the use of hue or value change—altering their chromatic color or simply making some lighter or darker.**



**When an element in a visual field distinguishes itself from others—as does the vivid red dot above—it becomes a focal point and, therefore, assumes the greatest level of importance. Although there are other kinds of contrast evident in the secondary material, the extreme degree to which the primary element visually disconnects diminishes the effect of these contrasts.**



**Repetition assigns relative meaning to elements that will be understood as related no matter where they occur within the visual field—even if separated by material that is clearly different. Hierarchy, in addition to being strictly about level of importance, is also about relation or establishing which elements are alike in meaning (whether they are important or not).**



**Compositional flow, sometimes called “eye path,” occurs as a viewer compares each hierarchic level's degree of contrast from the others and senses the difference as a decrease in optical resistance (another way of thinking about contrast, incidentally). The eye will move from the area of greatest overall contrast to the least, following a predetermined direction that the designer can support by positioning axes to help direct or by using graphical forms to point.**



A hamburger (or burger) is a sandwich consisting of a cooked ground meat patty, usually beef, placed in a sliced bun or between pieces

The term "burger" has now become generic.

of bread or toast. Hamburgers are often served with various condiments, such as ketchup, mustard, mayonnaise, relish etc. as well as lettuce, tomato, onion, pickles, and cheese. In 1906, Upton Sinclair published his book: "The Jungle" which exposed the lack of sanitation in the meat packing industry. As a result, many Americans developed a fear of eating processed beef. In the 1920s, Billy Ingram, (one of the founders of White Castle), began a public relations campaign to remake the image of the hamburgers sold in restaurants and to help make the burger a favorite food. In his book: "Selling them by the Sack: White Castle and the Creation of the American Food", David Gerald Hogan credits Billy

Ingram and White Castle for making the hamburger the very popular food it is today, and leading the way for McDonald's and other franchises to follow. The "cheese hamburger," now simply the cheeseburger, is said to have first appeared in 1924, and credited to grill chef Lionel Sternberger of The Rite Spot restaurant in Pasadena, California. This kind of burger is basically the same as a regular

hamburger but with a slice of cheese (cheddar, American, Swiss, Pepper jack, or processed) on top of the patty. The term "burger" has now become generic, and may refer to sandwiches that have ground meat, chicken, fish (or even vegetarian) fillings other than a beef patty, but share the characteristic round bun. By the mid 20th century both terms were commonly shortened to "hamburger" or simply "burger."

However, these "burgers" are usually referred to as "chicken burgers", "fish burgers", etc. A "hamburger" today can also be made with finely chopped beef as well as ground beef.

Hamburgers are usually a feature of fast food restaurants. However, the hamburgers prepared in major fast food establishments are mass-produced in factories and frozen for delivery to the site.

hamburgers are thin and of uniform

thickness, differing from the traditional American hamburger prepared in homes and conventional restaurants, which is thicker and prepared

thick-ness, differing from the traditional American hamburger prepared in homes and conventional restaurants, which is thicker and prepared

The extreme contrast of the single text line at upper left and the paragraph at lower right in this composition—both reversed from heavy, dark planes and both being the only horizontally proportioned elements within the field—ensures they'll differentiate from their surroundings. From that point, a reader is likely to intuit that the single line—positioned toward the upper left—indicates where reading should begin.

Designer unknown;  
Timothy Samara / USA,  
Instructor

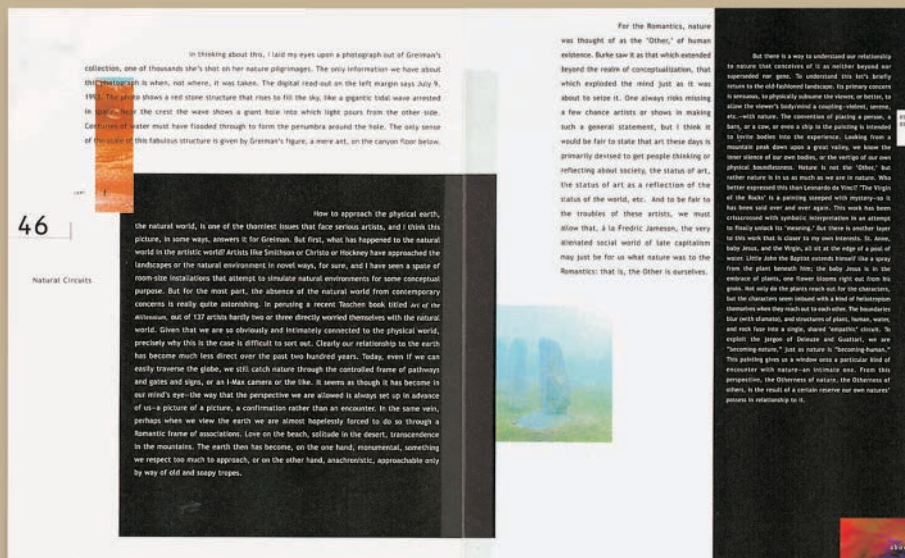
LOREM IPSUM DOLOR SIT AMET CONSECT

LOREM IPSUM DOLOR SIT AMET

When setting type on a circular path or arc, orient its entry point toward the upper left and, if possible, so that the first words are relatively horizontal. Compare the readability of the top (original) configuration to the altered version (bottom).

Although the black planes that contain reversed type are visually dominant over all else in this book spread, it's the hotly colored elements that direct the eye through them to the upper left-hand corner—by virtue of an invisible, but tremendously powerful, directional axis they help create as a result of being the only two chromatic elements in the space.

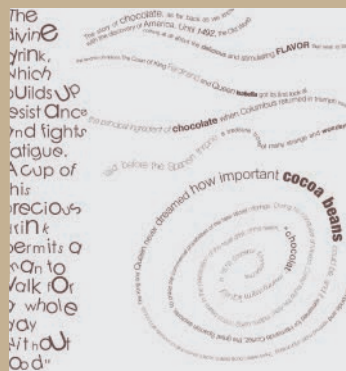
April Greiman / USA



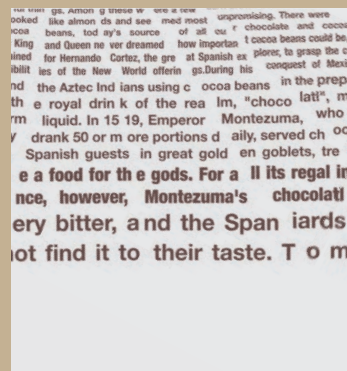
# Considering the Practical in the Impractical

## Easing Dissonance, Enhancing Totality

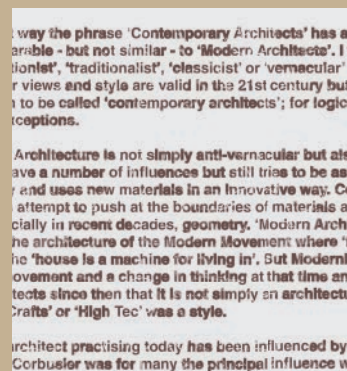
### Typographic Strategies



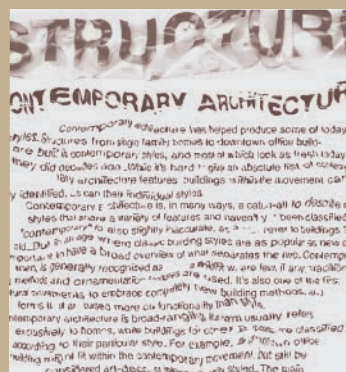
Irregular Shaping



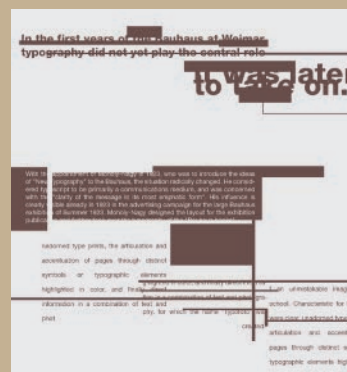
Spacing Alteration



Textural Manipulation



Distortion



Detailing/Inclusions

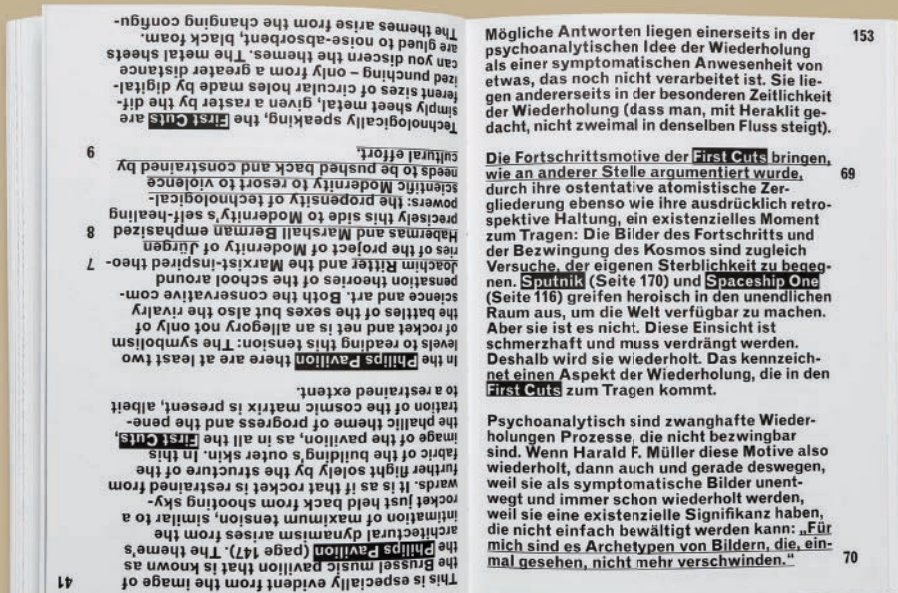


Pictorializing

This book's typography benefits from bold graphical inclusions that refer to other, large-scale forms in different places: they tie the text to those elements stylistically; they help break up the wall of large-size bold text that floods the pages; and they act as markers that help differentiate important informational details.

Büro Uebele Visuelle Kommunikation / Germany

More a matter of finesse than of practicality, the importance of applying macro-level compositional gestures to micro-scale elements such as text, albeit at a smaller scale, can not be overstated. Doing so creates greater cohesion among disparate parts and helps alleviate the potentially fractured or dissonant quality that often attends alternative compositional approaches. Text of a legible point size will withstand a degree of manipulation without sacrifice but, if it seems too challenging, consider treating subheadings and callouts or decks as a bridge between macro and micro.





## Pictorial Strategies



**Silhouetting**



**Overlap/Transparency**



**Vignetting/Alternative Cropping**

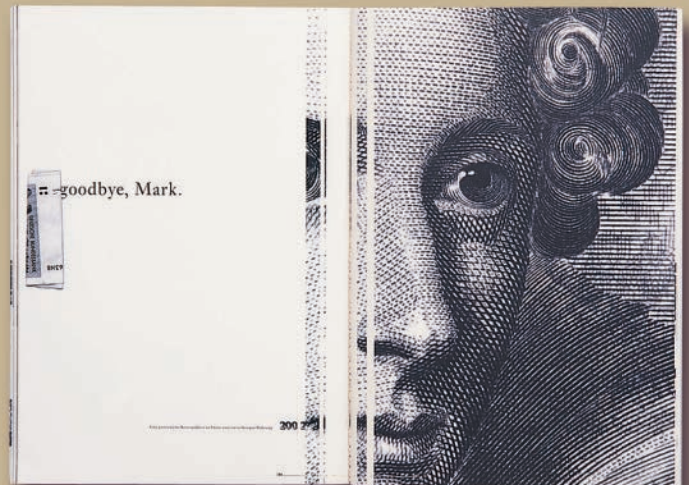
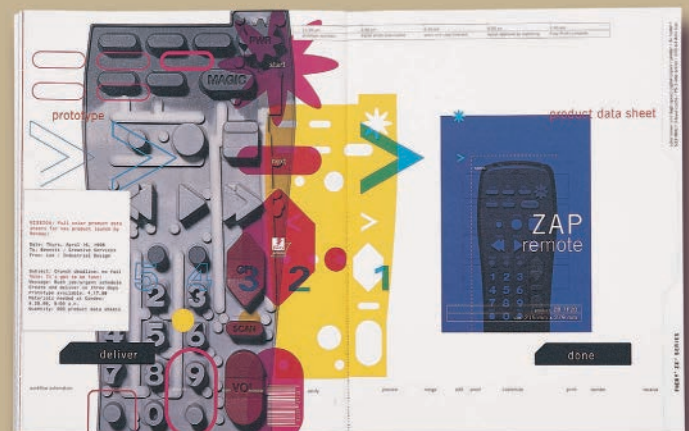


**Textural Alteration**

These two spreads, from different annual reports, manipulate imagery in different ways to involve them more cohesively with other compositional gestures in their respective environments.

Tolleson Design / USA [top]

Maksimovic & Partners / Germany [bottom]

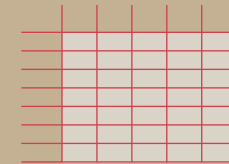
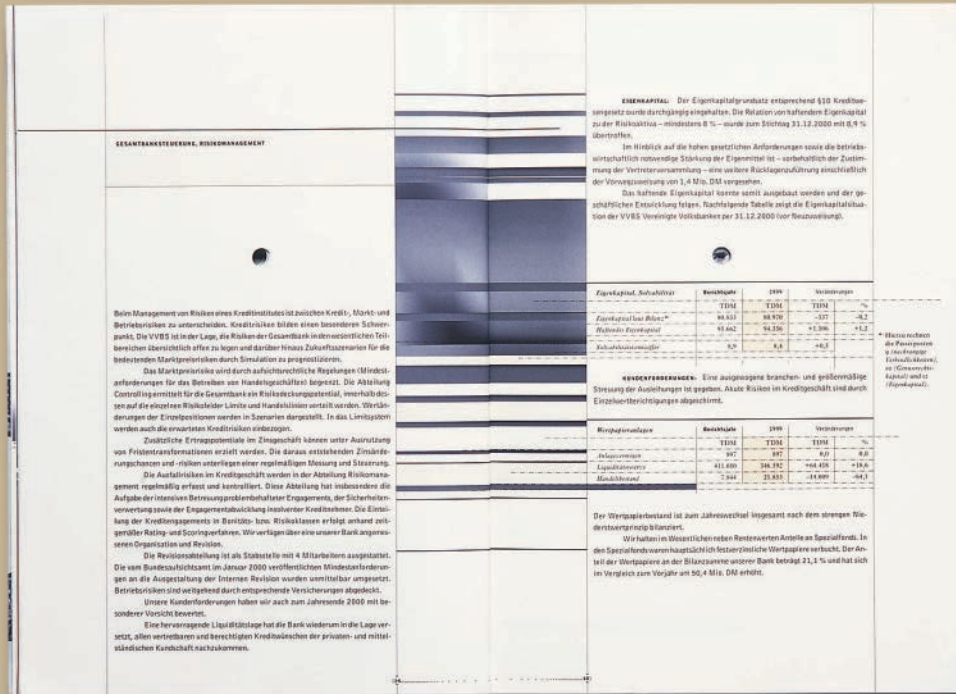


Images—especially crisp, naturalistic ones that are inset in rectangles—often will dis-unify from environments of an expressive, gestural, or spatially ambiguous nature. Manipulating such images to imbue them with visual characteristics found in surrounding typographic or non-pictorial graphic forms will better integrate them—again, to downplay potential visual dissonance and promote a more comforting perception of totality.

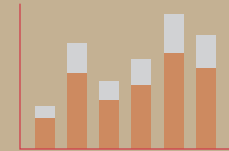


# Considering the Practical in the Impractical

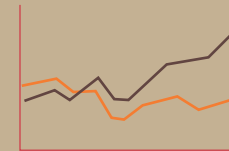
## Integrating Information Design



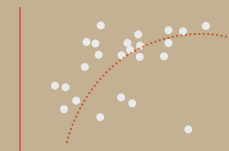
Table



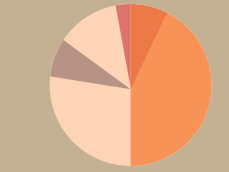
Bar Graph



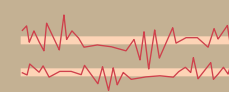
Line Graph



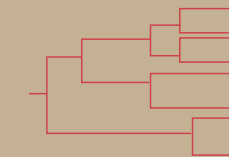
Scatter Plot



Pie Chart



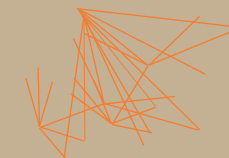
Sparkline



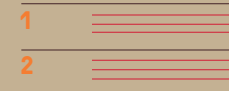
Tree Diagram



Pictograph



Network



Categorical List

The delicate and detailed typographic treatments of this annual report for a German bank, some of which are deconstructions of printing details from money, stocks, and other financial documents, interact playfully with rigid columns and, interestingly, with the financial tables—not so much as invading them, but

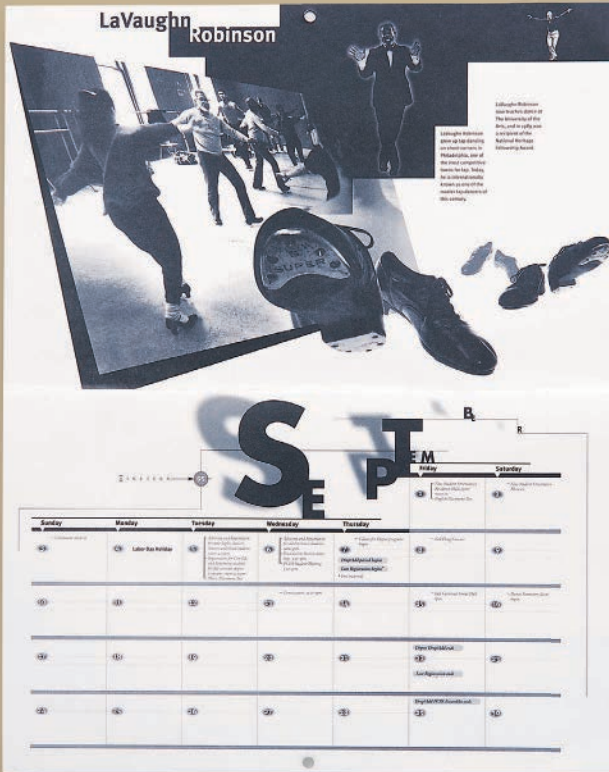
marking separations between tables and sections of numeric data within them.

Maksimovic & Partners / Germany

Statistical data, financial tables, and similar info-graphic material will typically be at odds, visually speaking, with non-grid-based compositional approaches. The looser, more organic, and gestural the layout is, the less these architectural and geometric elements will fit in... Unless they're made to do so.

It's important to be aware that many kinds of statistical data can be visualized in different forms, using different chart conventions. The first thing a designer will want to do is to determine whether the data he or she is required to present can take a form other than that in which it was provided.

If so, the task becomes a matter of choosing the data shape whose formal qualities most closely reflect those of the overall layout and recasting the data to fit. If not, the existing data structure might be alterable enough to create adequate formal dialogue with other elements. As a last resort, a designer might simply rotate a graph or table slightly, or position it over a more organic form, to diminish the presence of its corners and orthogonal axes—without compromising the data's integrity, of course.



Elements from the upper part of this calendar page cascade downward, progressively diminishing in overall activity, size and weight, and transitioning from planar to linear as they come to interact seamlessly with the calendar grid at the bottom. Within the grid, informational text

elements are treated to reflect shapes and tonal qualities visible in the upper area as well.

Mayer+Myers Design / USA



Although a conventional taxonomic tree diagram is presented as an orthogonal, vertical, or horizontal formation, here one has been altered to follow a concentric, circular structure that integrates it with its amorphous, organic image environment. The legend at bottom is set within a dot to support the circular motif.

Timothy Samara / USA

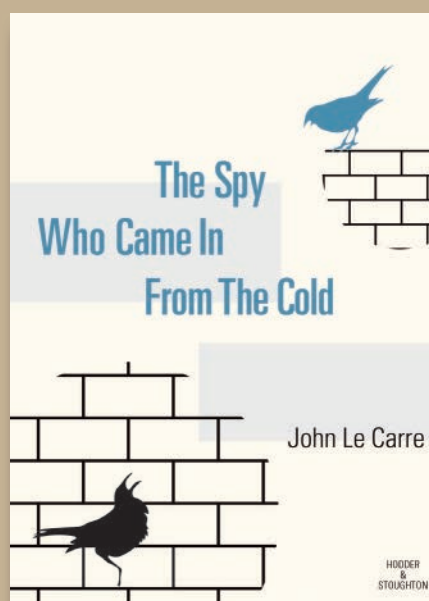
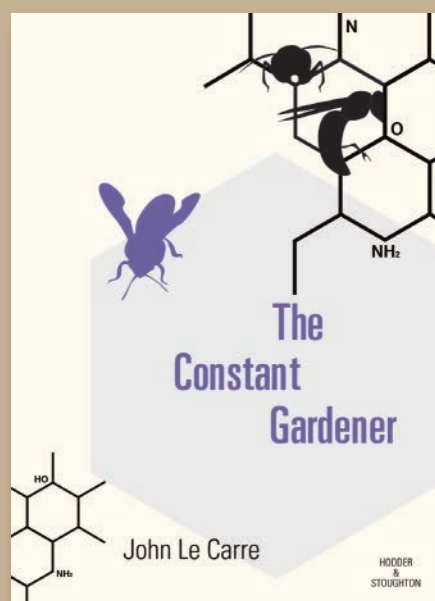
The table of contents in the book above, about the history of avant-garde filmmaking, deconstructs a modular structure to create an impression of film frames moving through a projector.

Designer unknown;  
Timothy Samara / USA,  
Instructor

Most design projects are systems involving serial or sequential components that require visual rules for consistency, but permit needed variation. Even though grid-based thinking encourages extensive variation, its rigorous logic tends to engender systems that are characteristically consistent and programmatic; expressing variation is more difficult. Most alternative layout approaches, conversely, grow from formal irregularity. The visual freedom inherent in their makeup is a double-edged sword when it comes to defining a system. Theoretically, alternative organizational approaches free the designer

from conventional rule-making, but a system of this ilk must still exhibit some consistency, and it must be maintained without compromising the project's unconventional energy. \_\_\_\_ The trick is to be able to analyze, as specifically as possible, what the most prevalent formal conditions are among all those that might be present. Asking simple questions of oneself is a great way to begin the evaluation process: "What kind of images am I using?" "Is geometry important in the shapes or relationship?" "Is there spatial depth, and, if so, what creates it—transparency, scale change, overlap?" "Do I sense movement, and, if so,

is it lateral, vertical, frenzied, calm, and repeated?" The answers to these questions are the system's rules. Each rule may be reinterpreted in different instances, based on the variables inherent within it, and to different extremes. For instance, if the fact of images cropped into an irregular trapezoid is a rule, one might decide that all the trapezoids are the same size and shape; or that they may vary in size; or that the measures of their sides may also change; or that the cropping shape isn't only to be trapezoids, but also parallelograms and triangles.



The rules that establish consistency among these book covers are relatively simple because there are so few elements to control in each—but they are very

specific: Three kinds of image; the use of black and one middle-value cool color; one of the image components is colored; the use of one type family and a consis-

tent style for each level in the hierarchy; the title is set as a staggered group of lines.

Eri Kuwada / Japan





These pages from an art school's course catalogue, although far more complex and detailed than the book covers on the opposite page, are nonetheless governed by the same number of rules, and very similar ones.

Compare the two projects and try to determine not only what the rules for this system are, but which ones they share with that of the cover series—and which are different.

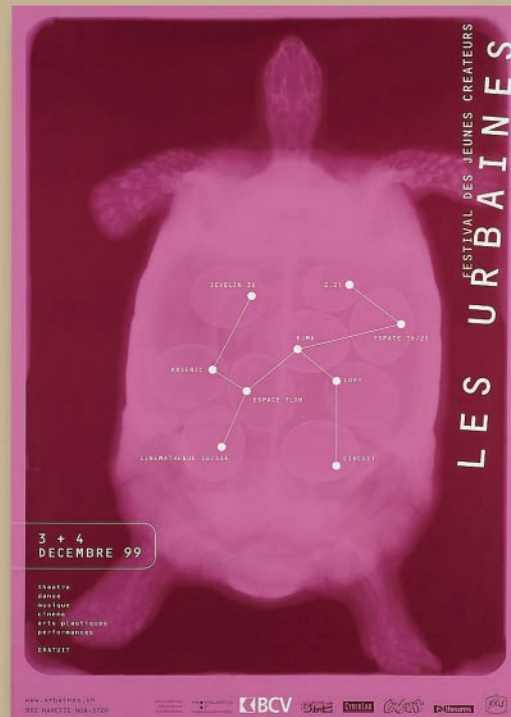
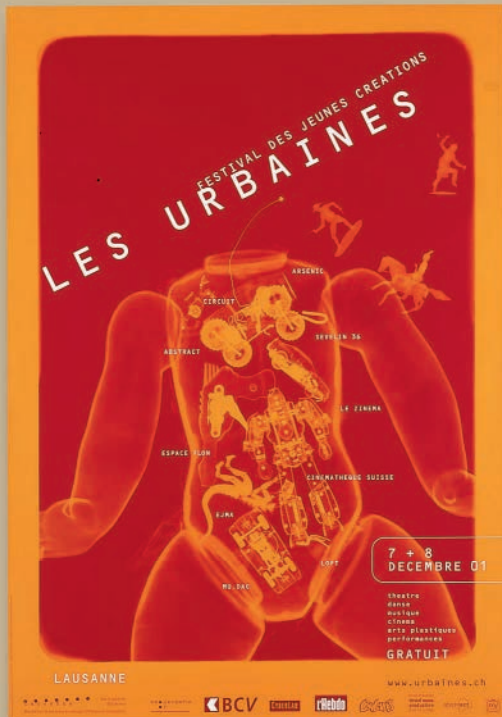
Stoltze Design / USA



It's worth noting that the more rules, the greater the number of variables for each, and the more extreme the expression of each variable, the greater the potential for the system to fall apart. Limit the rules to two or three, total, as well as the numbers, kinds, and degrees of, their variations: The result will be a more easily controllable, and unified, system. Further, the rules and their individual variations must be applied consistently among the respective parts to which they correspond. Where discrepancies arise—either out of need or desire—consider these as incentive to reinvestigate rules to see what changes need to be implemented. The discrepancy may be edited out or, perhaps, it may give rise to a new rule that must be resolved among existing elements.

## Considering the Practical in the Impractical

## Systematizing the Organic

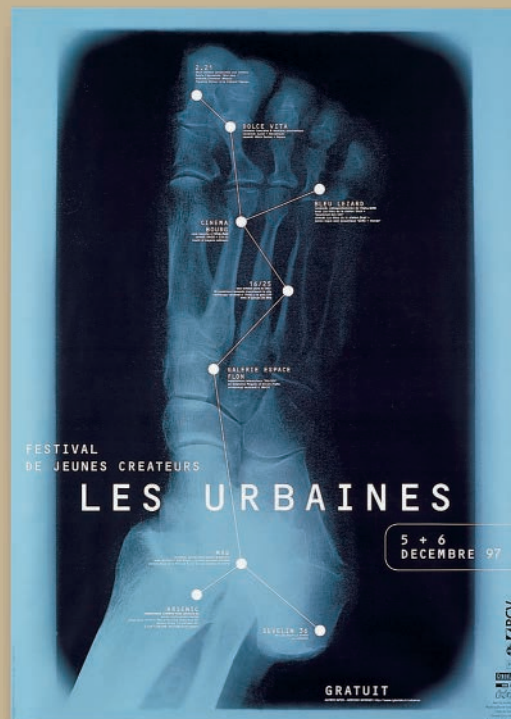
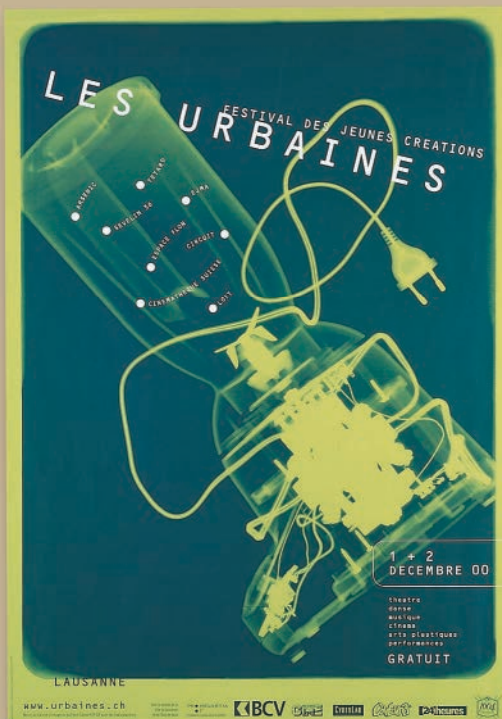


If a particular variation repeats inconsistently among the components of a system, the discrepancy will cause those layouts that share a similar variation to disunify.

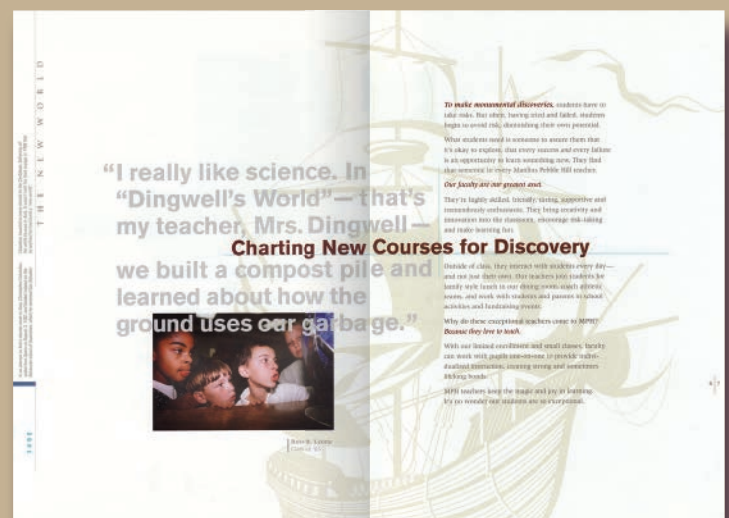
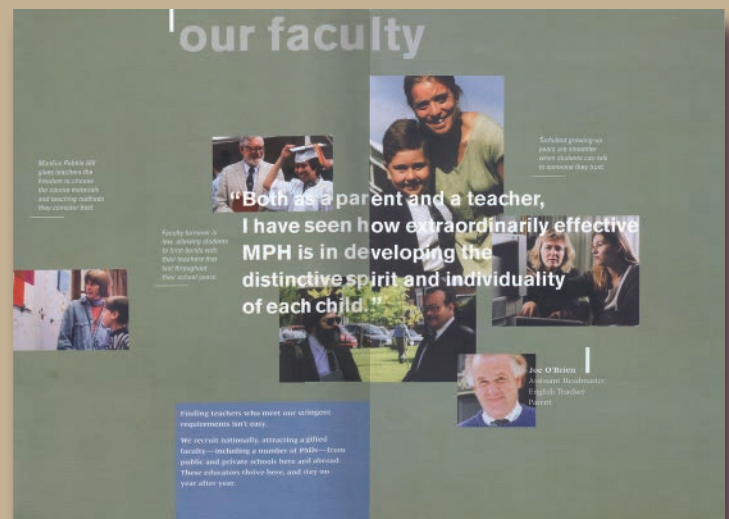
The number of component parts that make up a system is one factor to consider in how such a discrepancy might be resolved.

In this poster series, the main titling element rotates to a different angle in each poster. This variation is controlled specifically with regard to the fact that there are four posters: two of the titles are oriented orthogonally, and two are oriented diagonally. The system has a binary variation. If the diagonally rotated titles were oriented at the same angle, this logic would conflict with that of the other two, in which the angle is different in each.

Atelier Poisson / Switzerland







Each spread in this recruiting brochure for a private school exhibits one Western achievement paired with a conceptually similar stage of student development: for example, space exploration becomes a metaphor for senior-level students who will explore new frontiers upon graduating. The event is catalogued in a bar of

descriptive text running vertically along the left edge of the format.

Two kinds of text content—a description of grade level ethos and a quotation by a student—are each given their own column width and typographic style, but are fluidly repositioned from spread to spread in

conjunction with their accompanying images. Alignments overlap; texts are layered and cross the gutter. The spread 'title' always runs across the center as a focal point, binding the elements together.

A strictly informational student life section plays off these treatments but

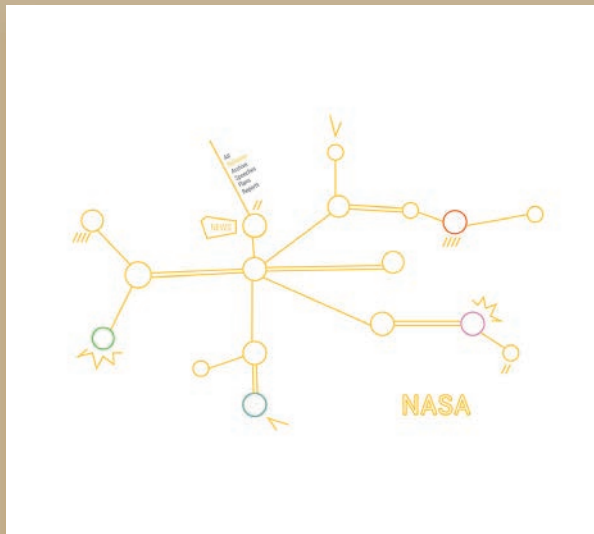
organically rearranges the rectilinear elements—captions, quoted statements, inset pictures—based on their formal qualities alone.

Timothy Samara / USA



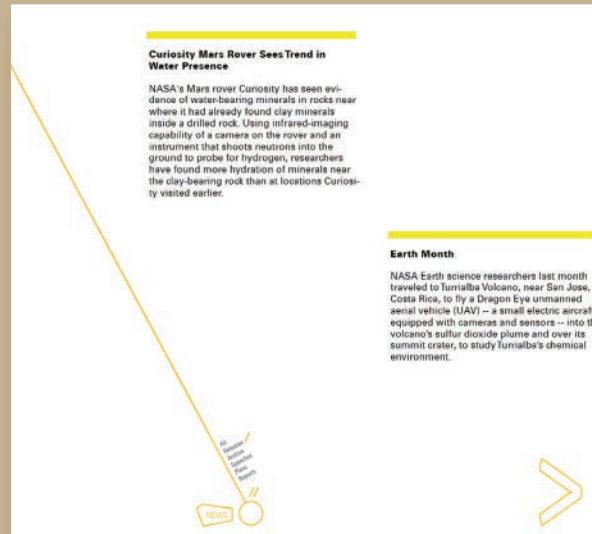
## Considering the Practical in the Impractical

## Interaction Design Without Grids

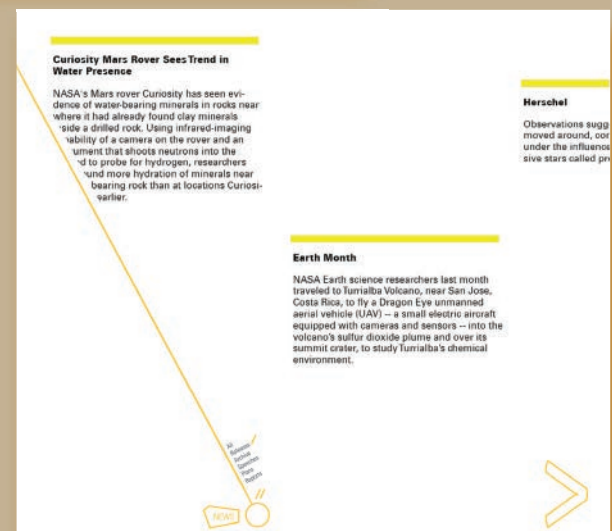


This experimental design for the U.S. space agency NASA presents users with navigation in a constellational structure reminiscent of technical diagrams. It serves dual purposes, being a functional, interactive tool and an abstract image.

Images in this sequence:  
Luiza Dale / USA



Upon navigating, the main menu shrinks to a reduced size and slides downward to a discreet location while selected page content loads from screen-right. A large arrow indicates scroll direction. Continued scrolling slides already-viewed content under the navigation's linear element.



Despite the presumption that designers could technically be freed by interactive media from grid-based editorial structure—given that page matter need not remain statically displayed throughout viewing, as it does with print—it's remarkable how ubiquitous grid use has become in online publishing. Although a grid readily addresses the requirements of responsive design and aids in rapidly templating multitudes of pages, there's no good reason why these requirements can't be equally well addressed through an alternative logic. Screen-based interactivity—and all it encompasses, from scrolling to animation to flyout

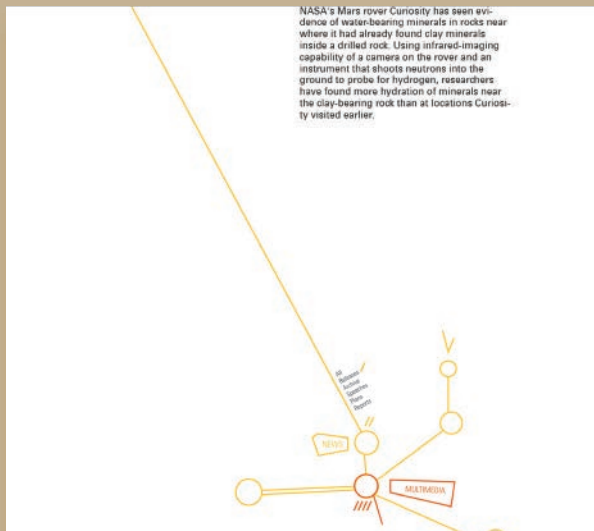
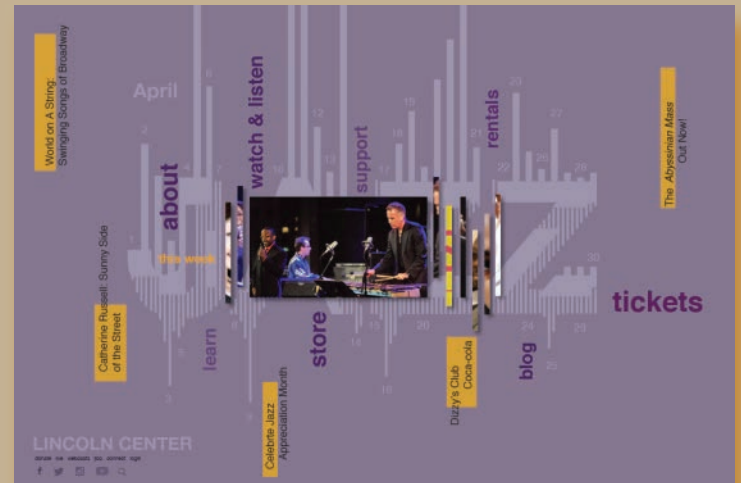
navigation to parallaxing—seems ready-made for alternative layout approaches. It's a wonder that more designers don't exploit the medium for its potential in this regard. \_\_\_\_ The limited area of the smartphone screen that presents a benefit for the process of grid construction here may be a hindrance: Unusual layouts and navigation functionality typically require large areas. One question designers might do well to ask is: Simply because one can design for device responsiveness, should one always? Is it important that viewers be able to access every kind of online content on their phones?

There really are no considerations or best practices for screen-based design from an alternative standpoint that diverge from those that exist for conventional approaches: Content is of primary importance; navigation must be clearly different from content; text must be legible; users must be able to intuit functionality and page flow, and be able to trace the sequence of pages or screens they've accessed; they must be able to get from one screen to another, anywhere in the site; the site must load quickly; and it must be a beautiful, compelling experience worthy of their time.

This screen design for a jazz orchestra evolves a vertical, linear structure for navigation from the client's wordmark. Mouseovers expand content elements in size to cover content and navigation that is no longer under consideration at the moment. Narrow slices expand to a fuller, horizontal format upon selection.

Azusa Takahashi / USA

Mousing over the navigation expands its size and releases flyout submenus; the current page's content scrolls upward to provide room, but will return to its previous position should the user mouse off the menu.

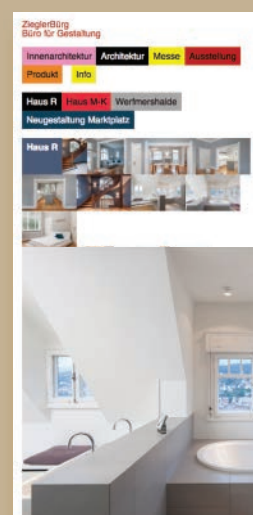
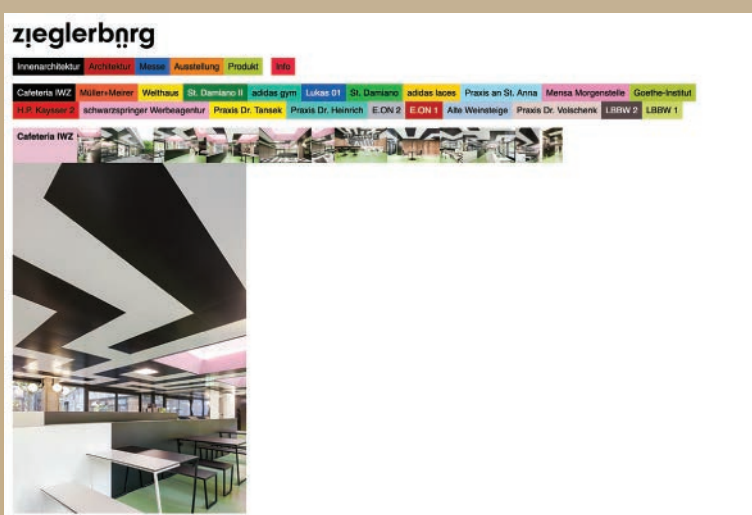
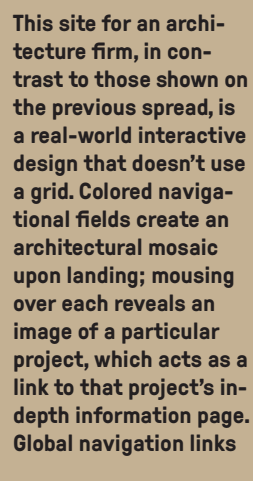
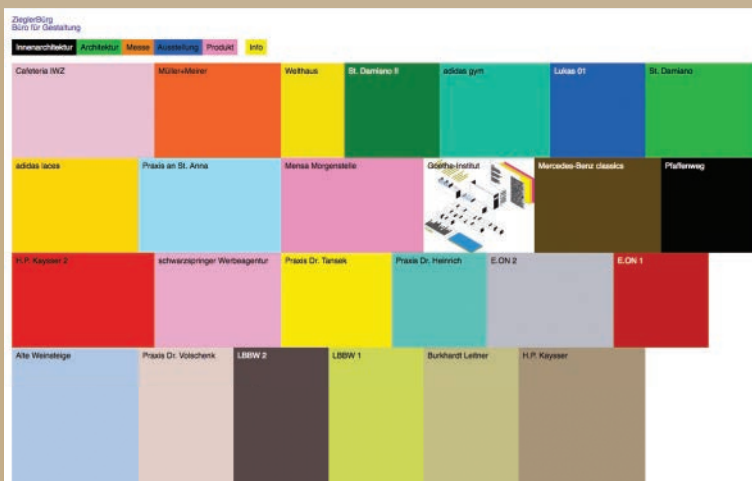


Images, cropped into circular windows, can exist in tandem with text content or expand from links within text.



# Considering the Practical in the Impractical

## Interaction Design Without Grids



This site for an architecture firm, in contrast to those shown on the previous spread, is a real-world interactive design that doesn't use a grid. Colored navigational fields create an architectural mosaic upon landing; mousing over each reveals an image of a particular project, which acts as a link to that project's in-depth information page. Global navigation links

reside in a narrow band above the main mosaic. As the browser area reduces in size, the site responds by reordering both the navigation and mosaic blocks to scroll vertically—appearing at the same size they do in the desktop format.

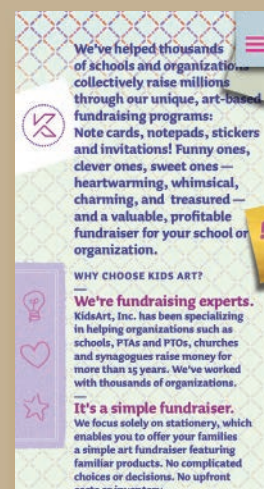
Büro Uebele Visuelle  
Kommunikation / Germany



Kids Art, Inc. helps students raise money for school programs by selling stationery made with their own artwork. Their site presents material in a dimensional, scrapbook-like array, with each card or paper element functioning as a navigation link.

Sticky notes, along with hand-drawn icons and details, combine with patterns and photographic textures for a playful, yet elegant, experience.

Timothy Samara / USA



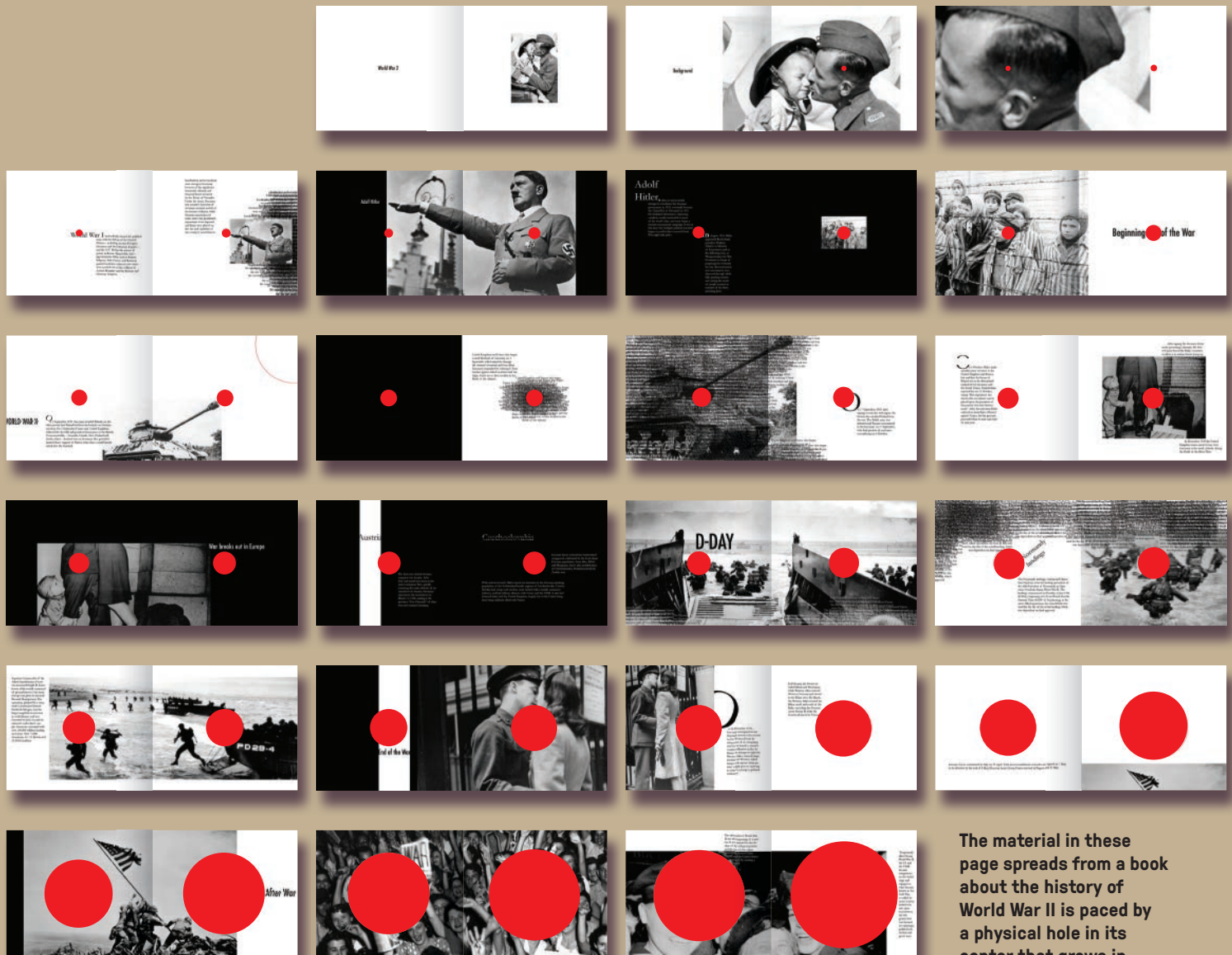
Typical of most sites, the various elements reorient to a stacked, scrolling configuration when the browser resizes to that of a smartphone screen.

To maintain a similar compositional feel as the full-size version in this limited space—but without becoming cluttered—primary content and navigation situate toward the center of the screen, while the card elements move mostly off-screen; their corners remain in view at the edges and are pinned so they remain continually accessible as the page scrolls.

Should a user select a card element to view its content or navigate elsewhere, the card moves to dominate the screen until it's no longer needed.

## Considering the Practical in the Impractical

## Pacing and Sequencing



The visual cadence in projects of a sequential nature, like books or walls in an exhibit, can be envisioned in a conventionally editorial way—using specific kinds of layouts to distinguish major divisions from contiguous content. Unconventional layout strategies tend to be more experiential than expository, however, and often lend themselves to other ways of thinking about sequence and pace.

Visual elements may relate to each other in time, as though in frames of a film. Images might move across a format or be otherwise changed from page to page, affecting other images or text that appear later. This kind

of kinetic structure comes to be recognized and understood as the viewer experiences the succession of frames. Using sensory experiences of space and time as organizing principles can be a powerful tool for evoking a visceral, emotional response from viewers.

As with more prosaic projects, decisions about the ebb and flow of material often will be driven by the content's requirements for sequential clarity. But, a designer might very well consider the sequence and pace as an idea unto itself that helps establish how the content ought to be delivered.

The material in these page spreads from a book about the history of World War II is paced by a physical hole in its center that grows in size throughout the book's sequence—a metaphor for a bullet's destructive effect. As the hole's size increases (shown as red dots), it pierces images and text to affect the interpretation of their meaning. Secondary pacing strategies focus on relationships of content volume, page position, and light/dark value.

Hayoung Shin / USA





The organization of this book, both verbally and visually, is filmic in nature: each spread is a frame that refers to the one preceding it and sets up the next.

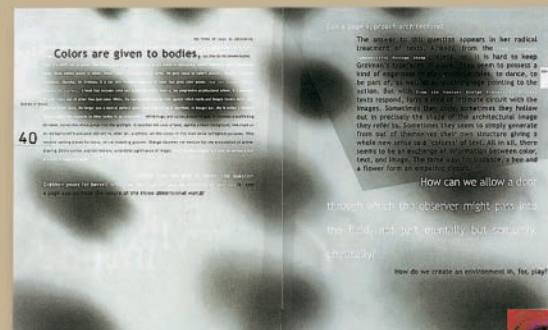
The relationships between images and typography are intuitive responses to a quantity of text, the predominant shapes in the background image, and how these meld to form a cohesive composition.

Spreads are set up as sequences of interconnected visual ideas. The negative space in an image on a given spread may yield to a similarly shaped positive image on the next; an inset or background image in the spread following that may



be enlarged to a full-bleed image that crosses over onto a subsequent spread. Continuity is created through rhythmic, spatial interconnection between pages.

April Greiman / USA





# Exhibits

Each exhibit is supported with a label and diagram that describe its structure, followed by credits, a general overview, and a list of related exhibits for comparison— from left to right, across the top of the page.

—  
The exhibit comparisons from both sections are numbered and color coded for easy reference.

Spontaneous Optical  
Composition / Organic

## DESIGN

**April Greiman**  
Los Angeles, CA | USA

**Exhibition poster for the  
Los Angeles chapter of  
the American Institute  
of Graphic Arts [AIGA]**

## EXHIBIT COMPARISONS

**03 04 09 10 11 15 17**  
**20 22 28 30 33**  
**21 22 27 28**



In this poster for an exhibition of her work, the designer draws upon her own writing—contemplations of the nature of visual space in graphical communication—as the basis for generating an abstract, multi-dimensional experience.

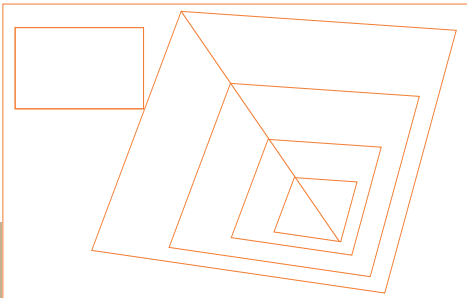
\_\_\_ The imagery is entirely non-pictorial, but derived from manipulations of photographic source material. The designer's choices with regard to texturizing, applying color to create impressions of light playing on volumes, transparency, and the confrontation of geometric and organic forms result in the suggestion of biomorphic, architectural, and cosmological objects—all interacting kinetically in spaces that appear to change depth from location to location.

\_\_\_ Material is organized in a painterly, intuitive way to balance a variety of formal contrasts: soft against hard, angular against amorphous, volumetric against flat, planar against linear; figure and ground appear to change place. Every element acts in concert with the others around it, producing an overall cohesion, but leaving the viewer free to explore the visual and verbal material as he or she sees fit.

\_\_\_ Type acts as image within its surrounding ambiguous spatial environment. The designer introduces contrasts within individual type elements (changes in size, weight, and spacing; baseline shifts; and color differences) to translate the formal gestures of the macro-scale imagery into the typography, ensuring the two kinds of visual language are cohesively integrated.

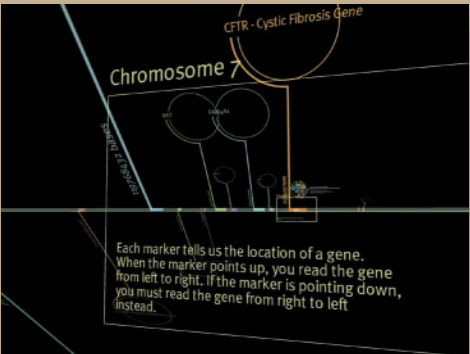
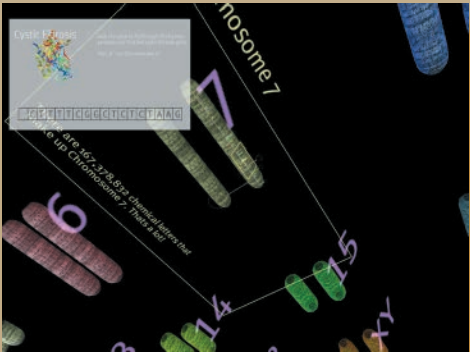
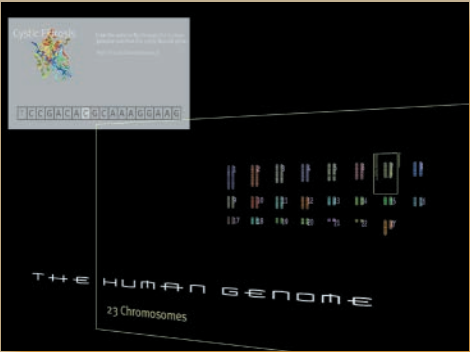
\_\_\_ The visual field envelops the viewer to privilege the optical experience over informational hierarchy; the viewer may discover and interact with verbal matter at leisure.

Nested, Relative-Scale  
Diagram Mapping



DESIGN  
Small Design Firm  
Cambridge, MA | USA  
Interactive exhibition  
interface for the Chicago  
Museum of Science  
and Industry

EXHIBIT COMPARISONS  
04 09 14 15 23 29 31  
03 11 21 22 24 32

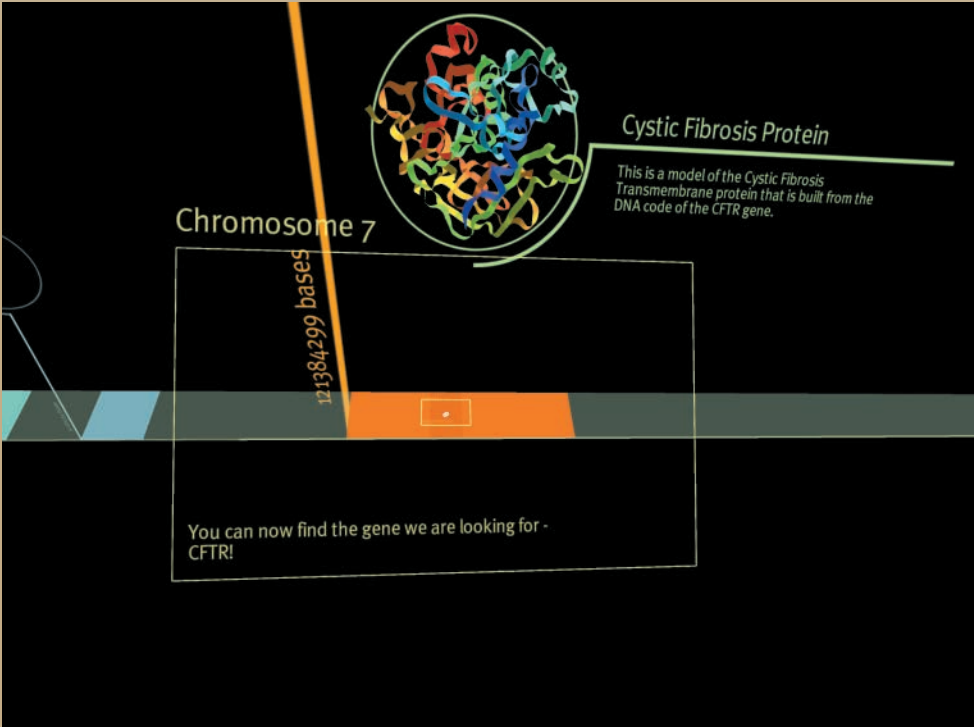


By communicating extremely complex information in an intuitive way, this dynamically spatial interface for a computer-generated map of the human genome organizes information in virtual space based on the natural shapes of the biological material. Instead of imposing a modular structure to contain the information, the designer uses the existing genetic architecture as the information structure. Viewers are able to move into, through, and around the components of genetic material.

From an exterior specimen view of the chromosomes, laid out into rows, the user can intuitively point to the chromosome they'd like to explore, and in doing so, fly into

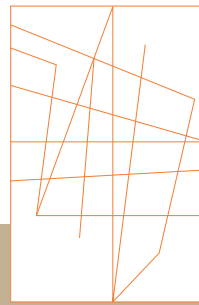
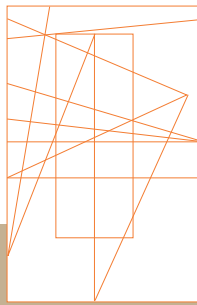
it for closer inspection. Within this enlarged view, the user can choose from additional components that have become visible. Their position is relative to the superstructure, of which they are a part. Diagrammatic information and text are positioned in relation to the structures they describe.

At the upper left of the screen, a navigational box shows relative position within the structure's scale and highlights information relevant to that location.





## Spontaneous Composition / Narrative Allusion



DESIGN

Tenazas Design  
Beacon, NY | USA

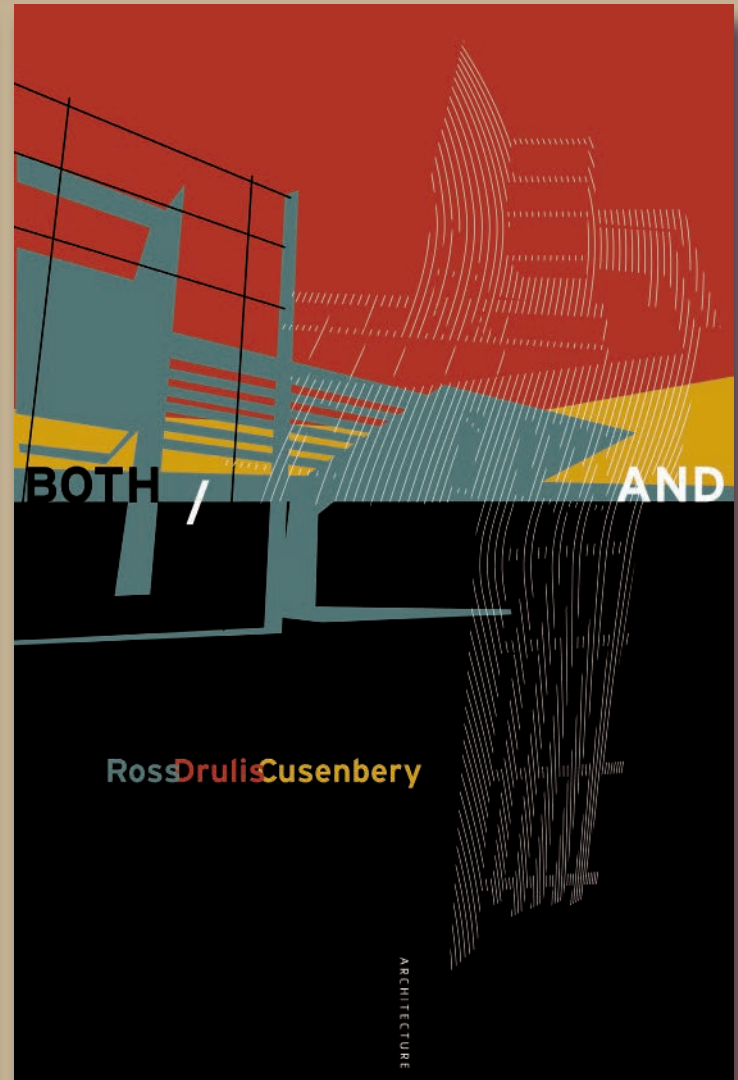
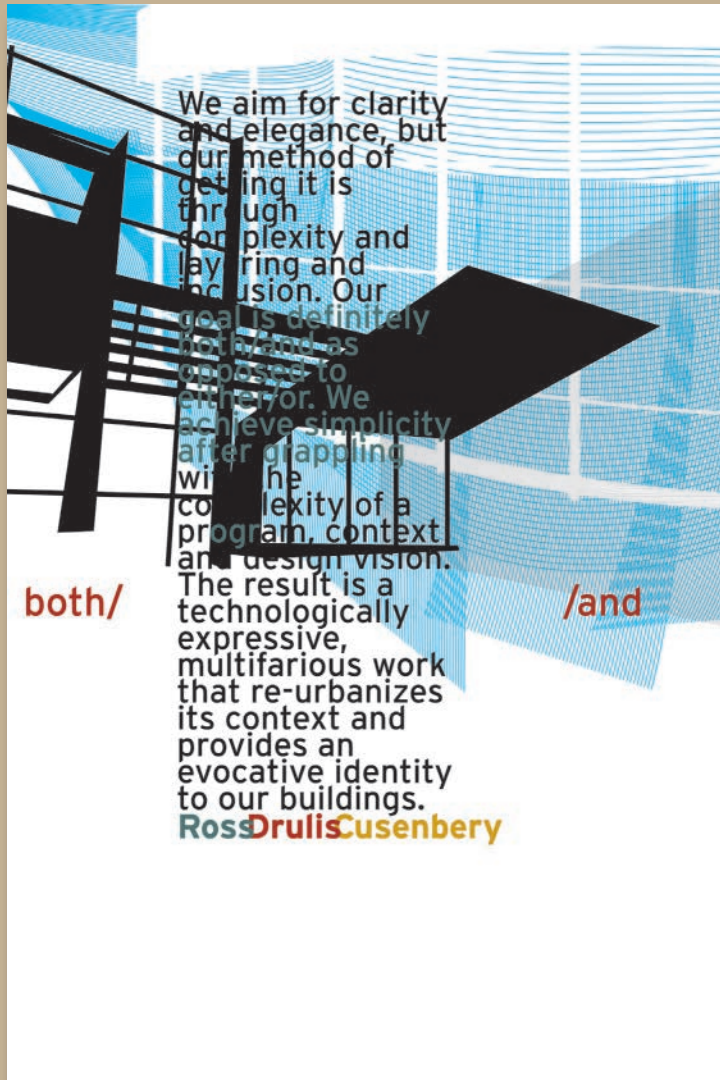
Promotional poster for an  
architectural practice

EXHIBIT COMPARISONS

01 04 10 13 14 16 17

20 22 25 26 34

10 24



The formal decisions made for the front and back of this poster visualize the philosophical approach of the firm that it promotes—the contextual relationship of simplicity and complexity, austerity and irrational messiness.

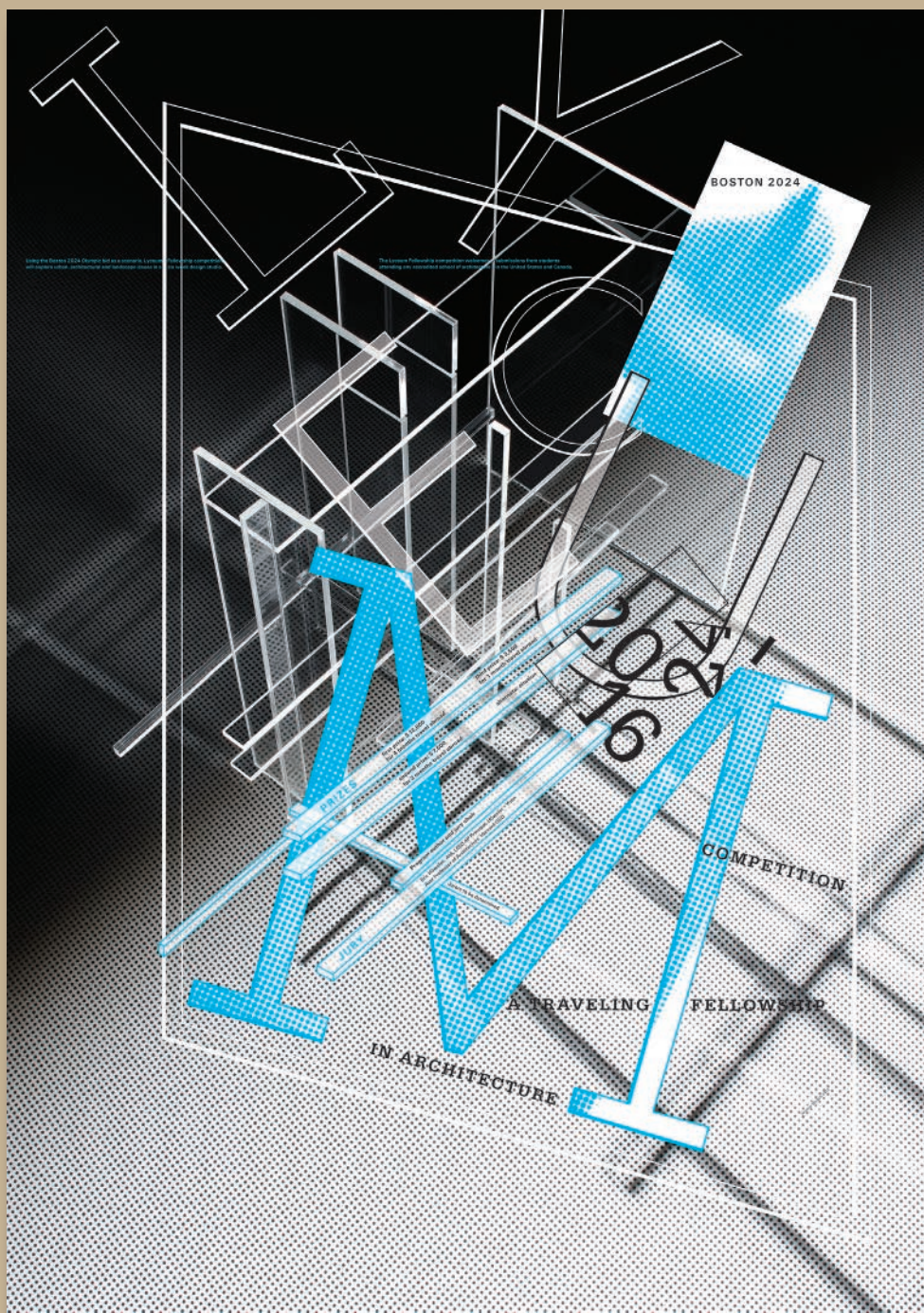
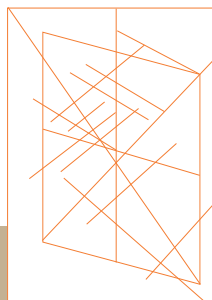
Forms that are clearly architectural elements are removed from their original contexts, brutally chopped, and filled with color to flatten them into sharp, abstract planes; their stark clarity is regularly interrupted by patterned elements, supporting planes, and typography to create layers of material that jump between foreground

and background. The spatial confusion and complicated interferences of shape and text overlaps, however, are underpinned by a rigorously controlled network of geometric axes—the edges of every element line up with or point to those of other elements, junctures between them (or between elements and the edges of the format). On the front side (right), for instance, the white slash following the word BOTH describes a diagonal axis connecting the initial R of the firm's name to the top of the vertical gray line in the image—and then on to the point along the

poster's top edge where the axis of the word architecture, at the poster's foot, strikes it. Interestingly, the slash crosses a strong visual boundary, joining the space above and below. This gesture, like the tensions established throughout, captures a sense of duality: The slash takes on the meaning of the words it separates.



## Spontaneous Composition / Geometric / Narrative Allusion



The Lyceum Organization sponsors a design competition for architecture students; the winners receive a stipend for travel to enhance their studies. Each year, the competition proposes a particular problem to be solved. The 2016 competition was inspired by the hypothetical proposal that Boston be the host city for the 2024 Summer Olympic Games. Given that the International Olympic organization jealously guards its brand, no references to the five rings appear. Nor, for that matter, do any athletes or literal architectural depictions.

— On the other hand, the formal vocabulary in the poster is entirely architectural—based on a photograph of lucite planes and frames and their cast shadows, suggesting a building model—while the tumbling arrangement of typography and supporting graphical forms imparts a kinetic athleticism; one senses runners jumping hurdles, gymnasts on uneven bars, javelins flying.

— The designers pay close attention to the relative parallel or divergent nature of axes and their junctures, distributing them along a limited selection of planar levels and directions to ensure well-crafted, rhythmic cohesion instead of chaotic randomness.





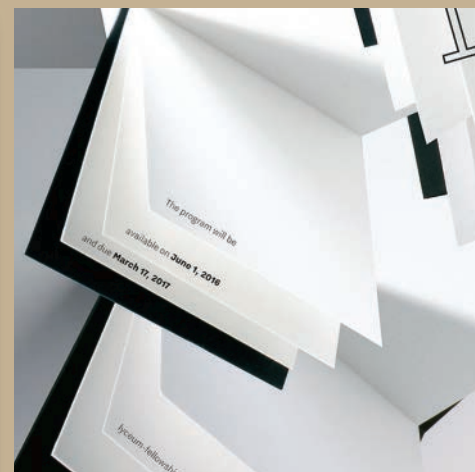
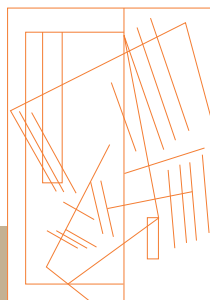
Skolos/Wedell  
Canton, MA | USA

Posters announcing  
an annual student architec-  
tural design competition

01 02 03 13 17 20 22

25 26 33

03 07 27 32



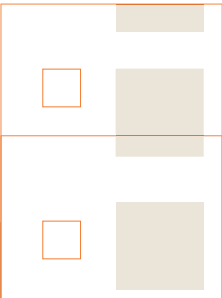
The 2017 competition focuses on a small branch library in one of New York City's transitional neighborhoods. The project guidelines noted that entrants must negotiate between two levels of public access—a communal, street level one and an “ennobled” space, a terrace separated from the surrounding neighborhood.

Photographs of books assume an architectural solidity through scale and lighting, moving through a complicated space to cross a digitally imposed boundary. Elements seem to cross this divide, or to be separated by it, at different locations; diagonal and vertical axes repeat in continual counterpoint; and a pattern of letters (also expressing orthogonal and diagonal orientations) appears to move across the surface or to be part of the dimensional space. All these attributes signify unification of the two aforementioned spaces.

A large, frame-like form highlights the poster's spatial division, while narrow red planes, together with selected type forms, work to visually cross it. The frame suggests the walls of a building in plan; the red planes evoke an interpretation of bookmarks.



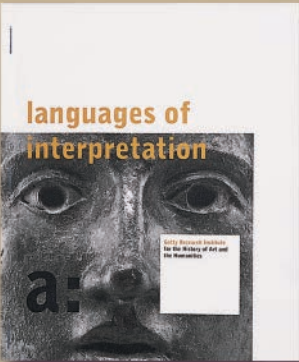
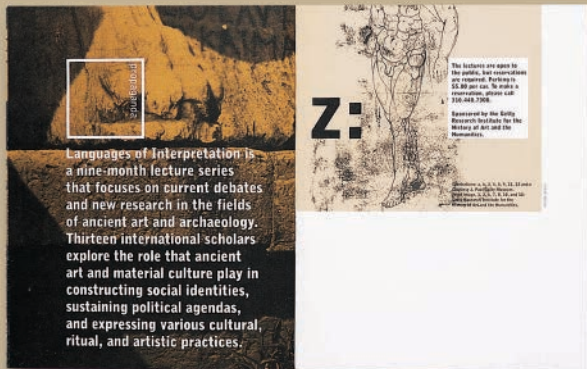
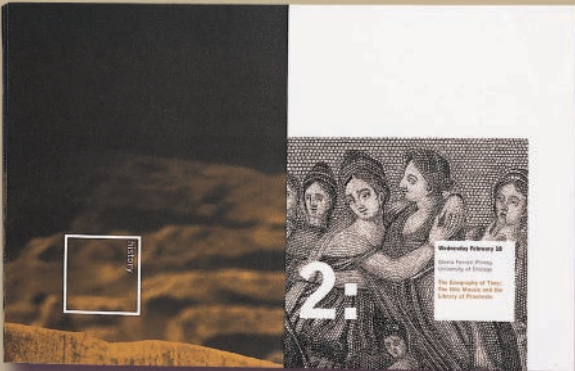
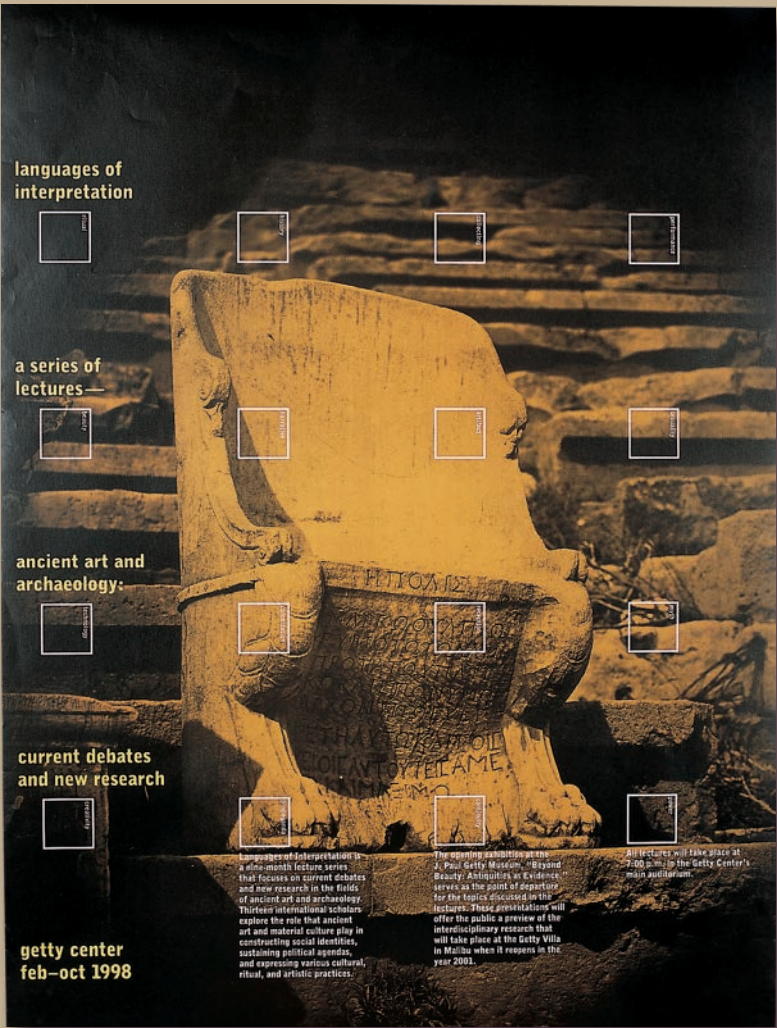
# Grid Deconstruction / Modular / Physical



DESIGN  
**Simon Johnston**  
Los Angeles, CA | USA

Poster/brochure for a  
lecture series at the Getty  
Research Institute

EXHIBIT COMPARISONS  
07 09 12 14 16 21 25  
28 35  
01 03 06 08 09 10 11  
13 15 16 19 23 24 25  
28 31



This project makes explicit the theme of the lecture series it announces. First, it interprets the material in two forms—as a poster, and as a booklet, created when the poster is cut down (each is a distinct structural language). This physical deconstruction of the poster’s modular grid results in a new layout system: full-bleed texture and symbolic title on the left, informational caption enclosed in a corresponding square on the right. It retains some modularity, but alignments become compromised and images appear to slide from one page to another—creating opportunities for viewers to reinterpret the juxtapositions between symbolic key words, lecture titles, and images.



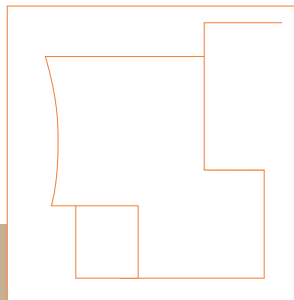
# Grid Deconstruction / Manuscript / Splicing, Deformation

The deconstruction of a manuscript grid gives a quiet yet wry context for a book exhibiting the work of radical graphic designers. Ample margins, larger outside than at top, set the text block low on the page. The blocks mirror each other across the gutter.

— The proportions seem at first to be the only unconventional aspect of the classical structure; however, structural details in the typography reveal there's more to it. Images intrude into the main text block as needed, carving out large blocks of the column. This same deleting of a portion of the column provides space for captions accompanying the exhibited work. In some instances, the captions practically butt the alignment of the primary text block, creating extreme tension and an uncertainty in space.

— Irregular negative shapes that are independent of image—ellipses and diagonals—sometimes cut into the primary text block, reinforced by similarly shaped captions or callouts. Conflicting alignment relationships, in which a justified column is greeted by a caption set flush-right (or more jarring, a caption that is also justified and shifted off baseline by a few points) add an edgy, transgressive elegance that helps break up the vast field of text.

— The triangular terminus of the column at the page foot is an archaic book design gesture from the 16th century. This detail highlights the subversive nature of this book's design: celebrating the visual avant-garde with an exceptionally traditional typographic style and calling into question what, really, is so radical about any of it?



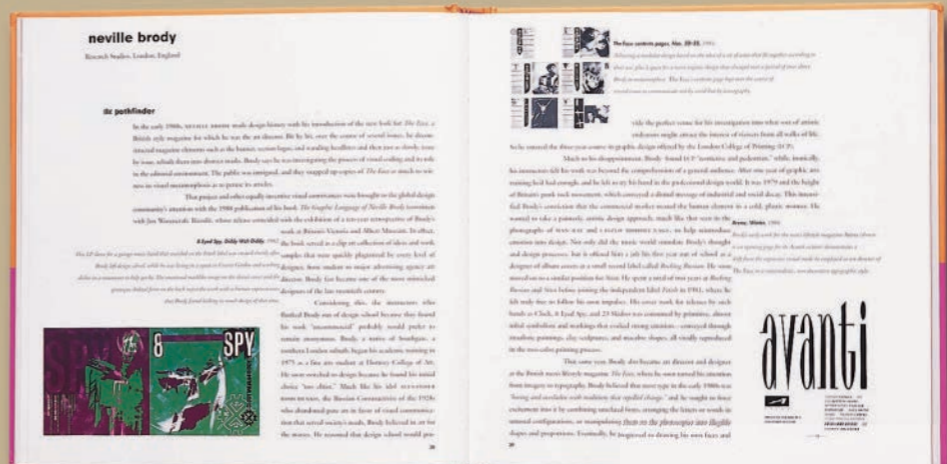
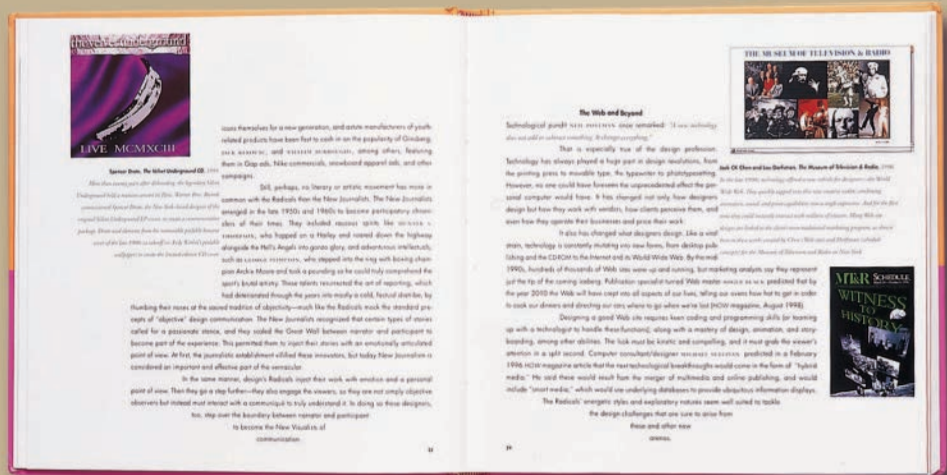
DESIGN

McCoy & McCoy  
Buena Vista, CO | USA

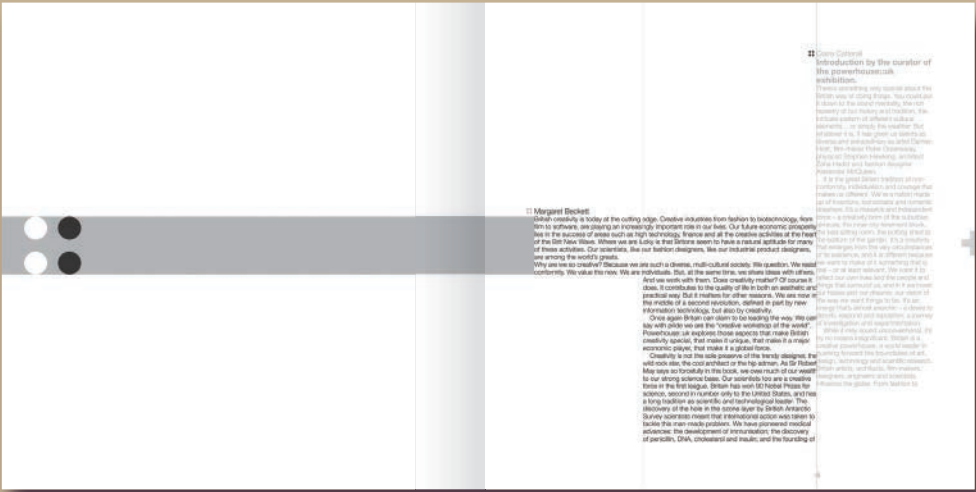
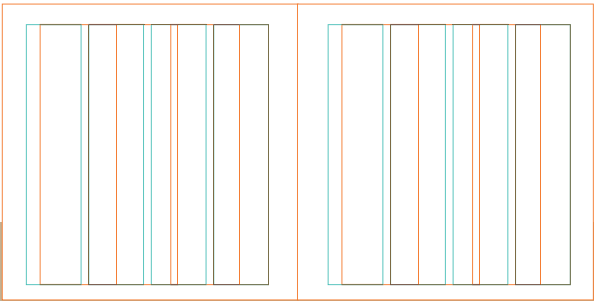
Casebound book on graphic design for Chronicle Books

EXHIBIT COMPARISONS

07 14 16 18 19 20 24  
26 35  
05 08 10 25 31



Grid Deconstruction / Column / Splicing



This catalog for an exhibition of British art, fashion, architecture, and industrial design uses overlapping columns as its base structure for text and image arrangement, creating a curtain of shifting planes that moves forward and back depending on the color and density of the texts and images. Images of the exhibits are allowed to expand or contract between the column alignments that occur in each given spread.

Vertical rules are used to increase the tension of particular text alignments, bringing them forward and distinguishing them from others that recede in space. Using this method, unrelated texts are able to run concurrently or even butt up against each other without confusing the reader.

Transparency and shadow resulting from overlaid tints and changes in the density of the typography increase the sense of depth and movement. No two intervals between alignments are the same, so the page structure is one of continuous movement, a metaphor for the British design scene's constant innovation.



Why Not Associates  
London, England | UK

Exhibition catalogue for  
the British government's  
Department of Trade and  
Industry

05 06 13 14 16 18 19  
21 25 34 35  
02 05 07 08 10 17 18  
20 22 24 25 30 31 34  
35



1,2. The powerhouse:uk exhibition hall, designed by Branson Cooke Architecture, is based on Peter Zumthor's Centre for Popular Music in Sheffield, opening in summer 1998. The museum's four stainless steel-clad drums rotate in response to changes in wind direction.  
3. Tomoko, a collection of graphic designers, film makers, photographers, writers and musicians, has a fair for making music. Here, the Tomoko examine the language of the architectural plan.  
4. Although welcomed internationally for over a decade, Zaha Hadid has yet to build on the scale of the process for a hotel in New York's Times Square. Hadid's first UK commission, a gravity-defying pavilion for Blenheim Palace in 1995, was awarded Building Of The Year by The Independent newspaper.



Margaret Beckett  
British creativity is today at the cutting edge. Creative industries from fashion to biotechnology, from film to software, are playing an increasingly important role in our lives. Our future economic prosperity lies in the success of areas such as high technology, finance and all the creative activities at the heart of the first New Wave. Where we are lucky is that Britain seem to have a natural aptitude for many of these activities. Our scientists, like our fashion designers, like our industrial product designers, are among the world's greats. Why are we so creative? Because we are such a diverse, multi-cultural society. We question. We resist conformity. We value the new. We are individuals. But, at the same time, we share ideas with others. And we work with them. Does creativity matter? Of course it does. It contributes to the quality of life in both an aesthetic and practical way. But it matters for other reasons. We are now in the middle of a second revolution, defined in part by new information technology. But also by creativity.

Once again Britain can claim to be leading the way. We can say with pride we are the "creative workshop of the world". Powerhouse:uk explores those aspects that make British creativity special, that make it unique, that make it a major economic player, that make it a global force.

Creativity is not the sole preserve of the trendy designer, the wild rock star, the cool architect or the top adman. As Sir Robert May says so forcefully in this book, we owe much of our wealth to our strong science base. Our scientists too are a creative force in the first league. Britain has won 90 Nobel Prizes for science, second in number only to the United States, and has a long tradition as scientific and technological leader. The discovery of the hole in the ozone layer by British Antarctic Survey scientists meant the international action was taken to tackle this man-made problem. We have pioneered medical advances: the development of immunisation, the discovery of penicillin, DNA, cholesterol and insulin, and the founding of antiseptic surgery.

Claire Catterall  
Introduction by the curator of the powerhouse:uk exhibition.

There's something very special about the British way of doing things. You could put it down to the island mentality, the rich history of our history and tradition, the historical culture of different cultural elements... or simply the weather. But whatever it is, it has given us talents as diverse and extraordinary as artist Damien Hirst, film-maker Peter Jackson, physicist Stephen Hawking, architect Zaha Hadid and fashion designer Alexander McQueen.

It is the great British tradition of non-conformity, individualism and courage that makes us different. We're made up of creative, iconoclasts and rebels; we're a maverick and independent nation. It's a maverick and independent future as a society born of the suburban terraces, the inner-city tenement block, the bed-sitting room, the potting shed at the bottom of the garden. It's a creativity that emerges from the very character of our nation, and it's different because we want to make it something that is not... it's at least relevant. We want it to reflect our own lives and the people and things that surround us, and it's the most important and our dynamic, our vision of the way we want things to be. It's an energy that's almost endless – a desire to debate, respond and negotiate, a journey of investigation and experimentation.

When it may sound unimpressive, by no means easy to do, Britain is a creative powerhouse, a world leader in pushing forward the frontiers of art, design, technology and scientific research. British artists, architects, film-makers, designers, engineers and scientists influence

It's a maverick and independent force born of the suburban terraces, the inner city tenement block, the bed-sitting room, the potting shed at the bottom of the garden

Photograph by Tim Marshall

the globe. From fashion to automotive design, from medicine to computer games, from graphic engineering to communications technology, our creative industry possesses a unique spirit and character that could only have emerged from these shores.  
The Department of Trade and Industry (responsible for powerhouse:uk) as an exhibition about British creativity. It is not meant to tell us the successful products and services Britain provides and it's most certainly not a roll call of the best of British. What powerhouse:uk presents is creative Britain as it is – a fusion, building up a mosaic of energy made up of a myriad of influences and extraordinary and varied talent.  
The exhibition is housed in a re-located historic four-thundred-year-old building and by Branson Cooke Architecture. The site is Horse Guards Parade in Whitehall, London.

The juxtaposition of technological innovation with historical public space seems to sum up the spirit of the exhibition – and itself speaks eloquently of the creative energy that the exhibition was commissioned to promote.

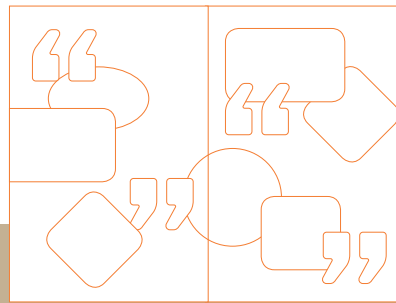
As a team we brought the contents, divided into five parts: Lifestyle, Community, Networking and Learning. Rather than present these subject headings – say product design, fashion, graphics, science and technology – we focused instead on areas of the British cultural landscape representing the role of different disciplines and approaches that are well represented online but less visible in reality. We felt this would more truthfully represent the richness and diversity of our creative culture, and also give an indication

of the important context out of which it emerged.  
Exhibitions provide an opportunity to create a sensory experience, a physical representation of an idea. Creating an environment of space, sound, images, light, as well as product, we didn't feel the need for many words – the exhibition speaks for itself. The book above us the opportunity to introduce the text – to present on the same idea and content in powerhouse:uk and to introduce their implications. It is not meant as a catalogue of the exhibition, but as another medium with which to communicate Britain's creativity.  
Like the show, it is divided into four parts. We invited a number of writers, film-makers and cultural commentators to create actually involved in the creative industries – to give their thoughts on each of the areas. We didn't want to present something detached – an overview of "what is" – but rather a collection of insights and sometimes provocative points of view.  
In "Lifestyle" we show how the experience of living in Britain feeds into the creative sectors and, conversely, how creativity influences lifestyle – in the furniture, the products, the clothes, the music, the sports that become part of our everyday existence. It's a synthesis, a powerisation, a redefinition of "what is".

British film are second only to Hollywood at the US box office, the largest market in the world. In 1996, film exports outstripped imports, resulting in a £30 million surplus. There are more positive indicators: UK films are becoming more popular in this country – they took 20 per cent of the box office (£100 million) in 1997. UK talent is now more willing to stay at home – writers such as Steven Slovic and Alan



Narrative Allusion / Spontaneous  
Composition / Vernacularism





Niessen & deVries  
Amsterdam | Netherlands

Issue of curated arts  
magazine, 1:1:1

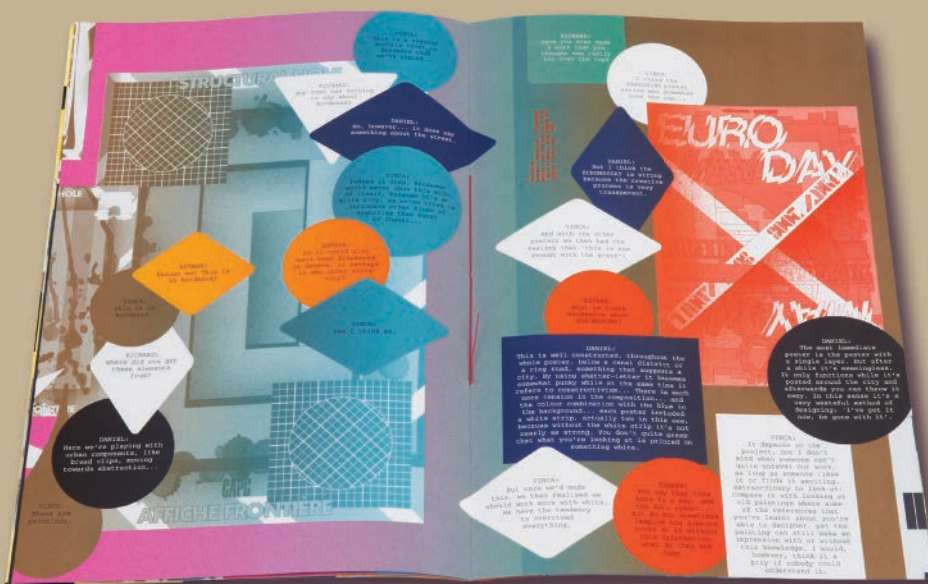
09 10 12 15 20 24 29  
30 33  
07 16

This magazine is an arts review, devoting each issue entirely to discussion of one artist, designer, or other creative individual. This particular issue focuses on the radical Dutch graphic design group Metahaven, known for their use of visual detritus, naive drop-shadow effects, garish colors, and for posing such questions as “Could the leftovers of graphic design be turned into jokes? Might—through this re-allegiance—design rediscover actual societal impact?”

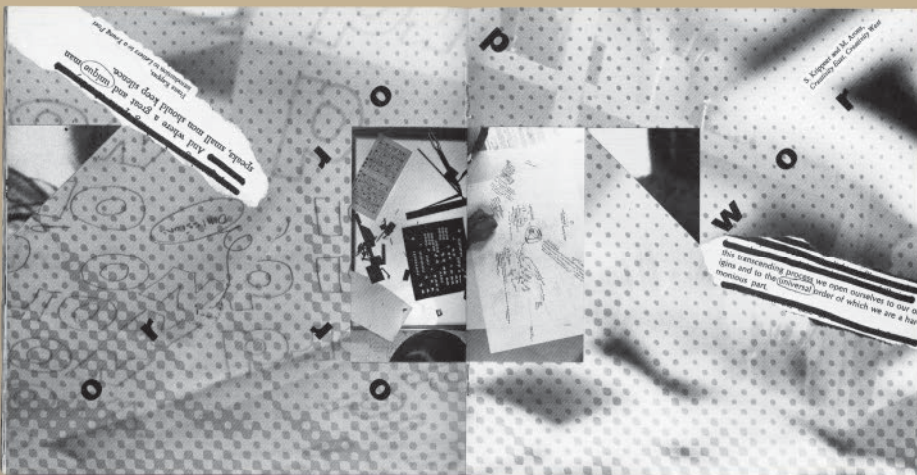
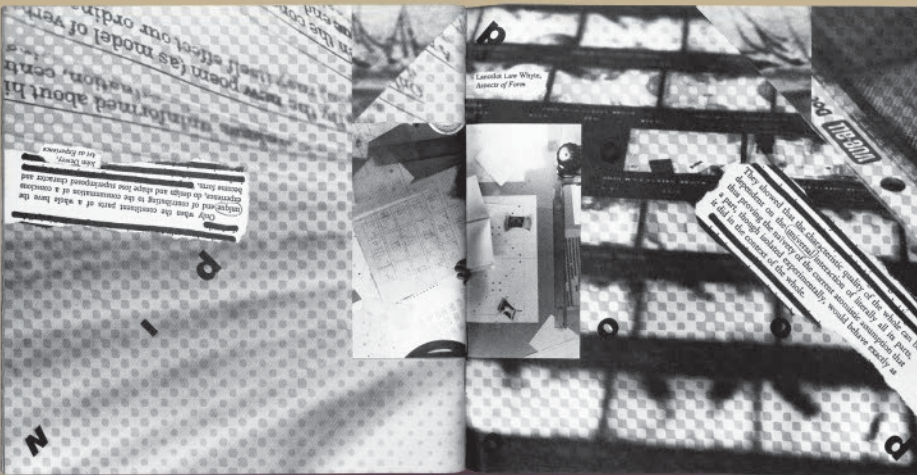
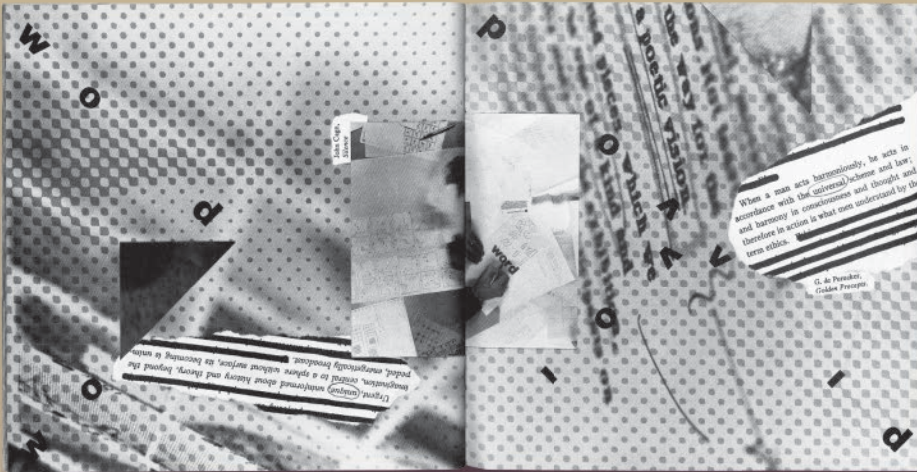
\_\_\_ The designers of this issue (somewhat radical themselves) drew upon their subject’s sources of inspiration— vernacular tropes such as stickers, lottery cards, product-promotion starburst violaters, playing cards—in which to carry the dialogue of an interview they conducted with Metahaven about their decision-making processes.

\_\_\_ The selection of particular shapes for particular quotes is random and mostly formal, but they are organized so that each one, which contains a sequential part of the interview, overlaps the subsequent one in the correct order. This strategy keeps the interview’s flow clear, but also results in a crazy quilt of interlocking shapes.

\_\_\_ In reference to Metahaven’s penchant for gradients, the magazine’s designers employed split-fountain printing, in which each plate’s ink fountain contains two or more ink colors that mix together. Each speaker was assigned a particular printing plate; because the split fountain spans several signatures, the color identities of the speakers change, but one can see who is contributing to particular segments of the conversation at different times nonetheless.







\_\_\_\_ The designer set up a modular grid within a square format using the horizontal, vertical, and isometric (45°) axes, and then systematized how each of the kernel elements, plus excerpts from essays and photographs of the actual design process, would interact with the grid. The square formats together form the layout of a book on a press sheet, and cutting the sheet into book signatures enforces, and yet also denies, properties of the grid. The master “eye” grid, for example, shows its triangular dissection, based on the master grid, which destroys its recognizability but directs the segments’ placement from page to page. The excerpted texts, which on one side of the sheet all refer to the idea of universality, come into juxtaposition with the opposing concept, uniqueness, when the pages are cut and folded together.

196

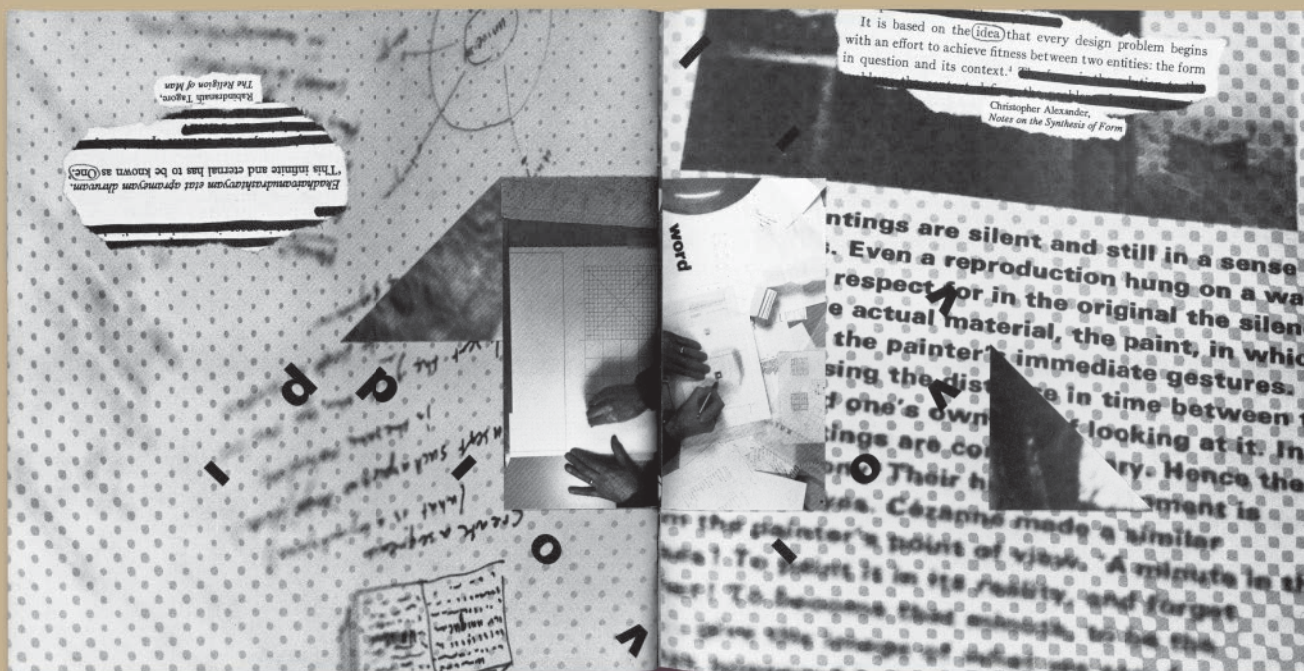
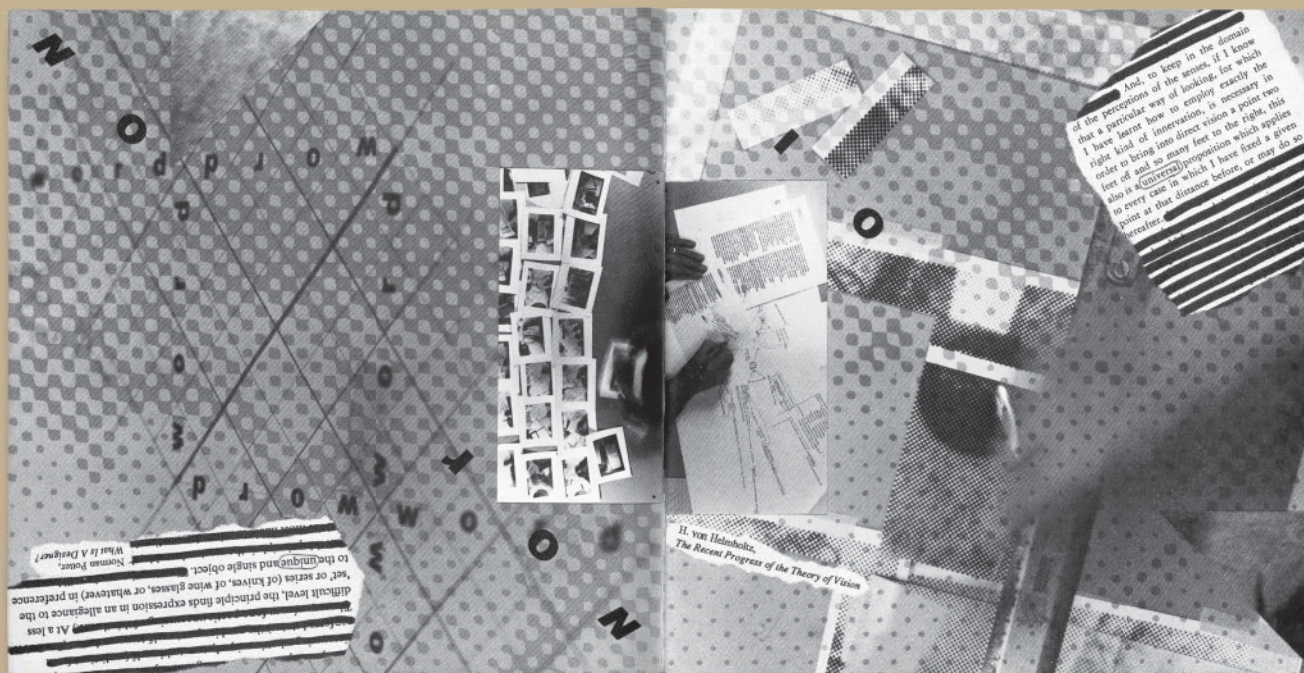


Thomas Ockerse  
Providence, RI | USA

Book created as a commis-  
sioned exhibition work

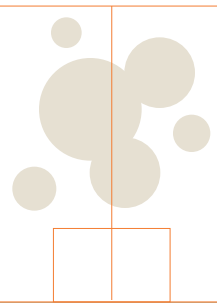
01 05 08 12 16 23 24  
28 30 35

01 03 06 07 10 11 16  
19 21 23 24 32 35





## Spontaneous Optical Composition / Centered Axis / Vernacularism



DESIGN

Timothy Samara  
New York, NY | USA

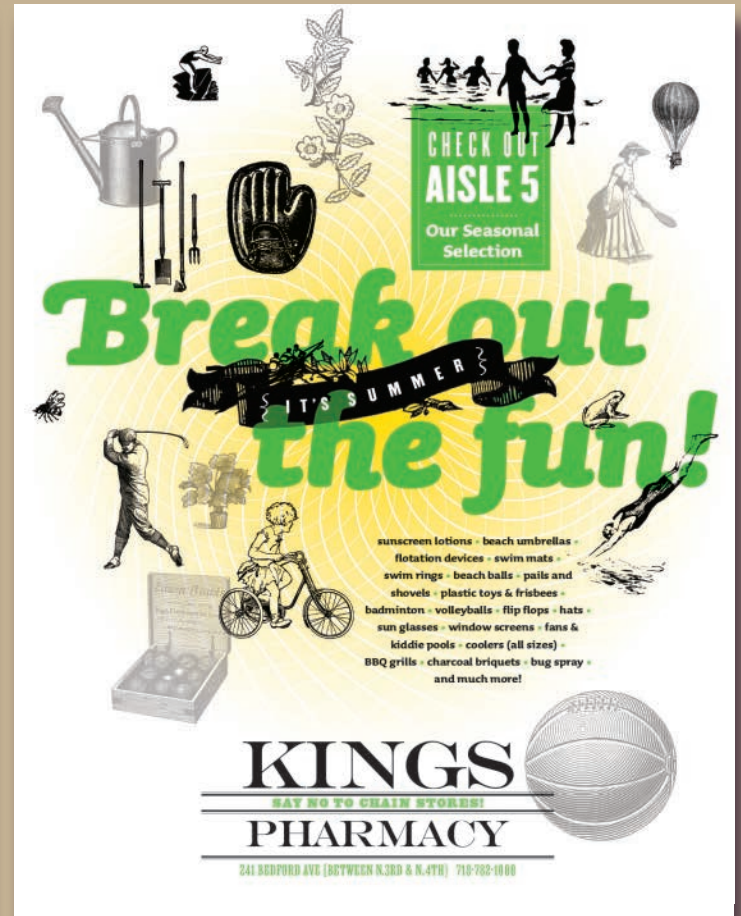
Seasonal advertising for  
a family-owned pharmacy

EXHIBIT COMPARISONS

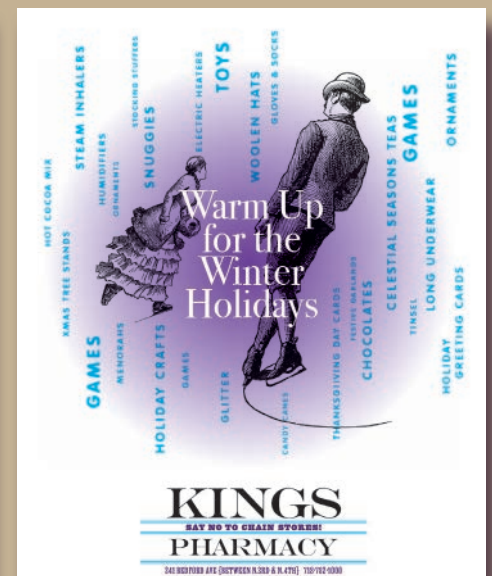
01 03 08 11 15 24 27

30 32 33

19



Aside from a consistently applied, centered, brand-information configuration, there is no system involved in this series of seasonal ads for a small, family-owned pharmacy. With the goal of emphasizing the client's individuality and small-business ethos, the designer uses a combination of charming, historical clip-art, vector graphic special-effects, patterns, and icons to create individual, poster-like illustrations meant to intrigue and surprise. Decisions about sizes, weights, shapes, stylistic details, and color are entirely intuitive, responding to the formal qualities of the elements as they are appreciated in context.

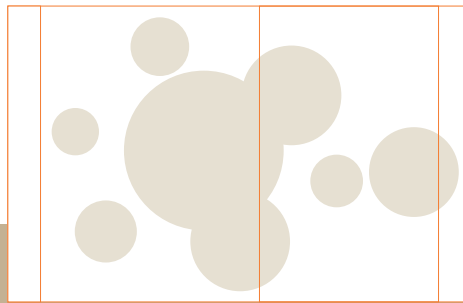




## Spontaneous Optical Composition

This online, tablet-format magazine about culture, politics, and entertainment takes an irreverent tone in its visual language, reflecting its mix of news, punditry, and satire. Although text typography is elegantly crafted and organized, and there are simple, one-column templates for text, for the most part every page or multi-page article is a free-for-all. The designer develops specific illustrations, graphic details, and typographic arrangements for each as seems most appropriate to express the content in any given case. All the elements respond to each other, contrasting or not, depending on what they are. It's a more editorial, old-school way of thinking about publication design that's not so formatted and corporate in appearance.

The one consistent aspect is the presence of hand drawing, whether as type, diagrams, decorative ornamentation, or illustrative imagery—whether in combination with photography, icons, or widget-like interactive elements.



### DESIGN

Laurent Pinabel  
Montréal, Qué. | Canada

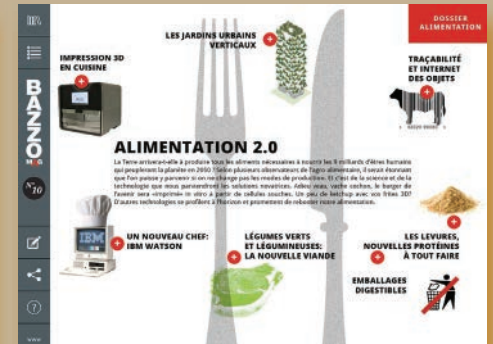
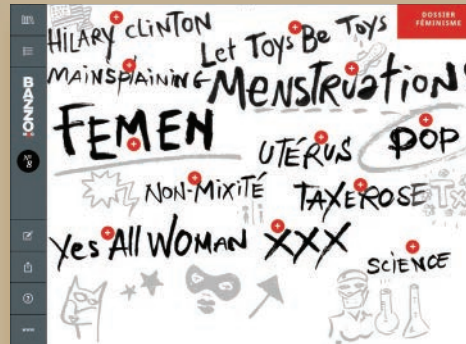
Tablet-format, online  
periodical design for  
Bazzo Magazine

### EXHIBIT COMPARISONS

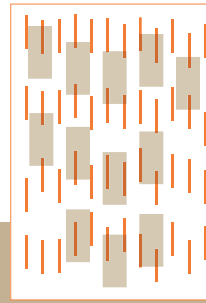
01 10 15 23 24 27 30

31 33

05 08 14 19 27



Narrative Allusion / Spontaneous  
Optical Composition



## DESIGN

**Niklaus Troxler Design**  
Willisau | Switzerland

Poster for an exhibition  
of posters at the Willisau  
Rathaus in Switzerland

## EXHIBIT COMPARISONS

01 05 08 09 20 23 33  
01 06 07 10 16 32

Ine lig und  
Ruedi Wyls  
Willisau  
Rathaus  
25. Aug-  
2. Sept '01

In the deceptively simple poster for an exhibition of posters on the theme “improvisation,” the designer uses two spatial levels—one for the exhibit title, in red, one for the event information, in black—as a way to add additional control to a carefully randomized layout of letterforms.

\_\_\_ No baselines, alignments, or margins here: The letters float freely as though scattered across the poster’s format. Careful consideration has been given to the precise placement of the forms, however, so that although their rhythm is made more random in feeling, their legibility isn’t impaired—despite the overlap of red and black letterforms that are close in optical color.



Spontaneous Optical  
Composition / Geometric

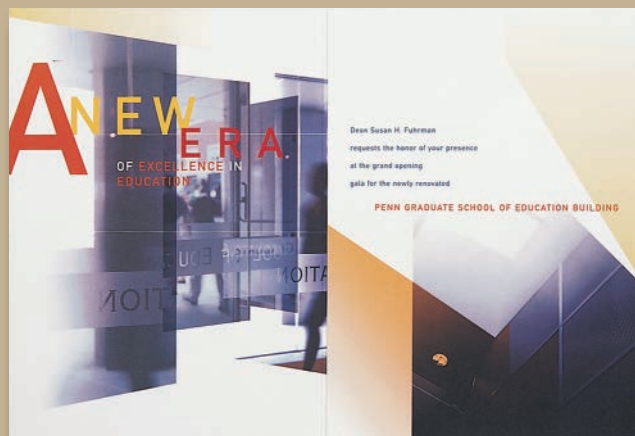
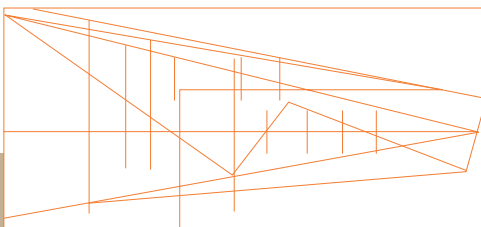
## DESIGN

Paone Design Associates  
Philadelphia, PA | USA

Invitation to an event  
at the University of Penn-  
sylvania Graduate School  
of Education

## EXHIBIT COMPARISONS

03 04 07 14 17 20 22  
25 26 34  
03 05 25 27



This invitation for an event celebrating a renovated university building uses a montage of the building's architecture as a main compositional influence.

\_\_\_ Intersecting translucent planes overlay similarly luminous architectural elements in a shifting temporal space that sometimes appears to converge on a single vanishing point but then... doesn't, leaving the viewer to ponder the ambiguity.

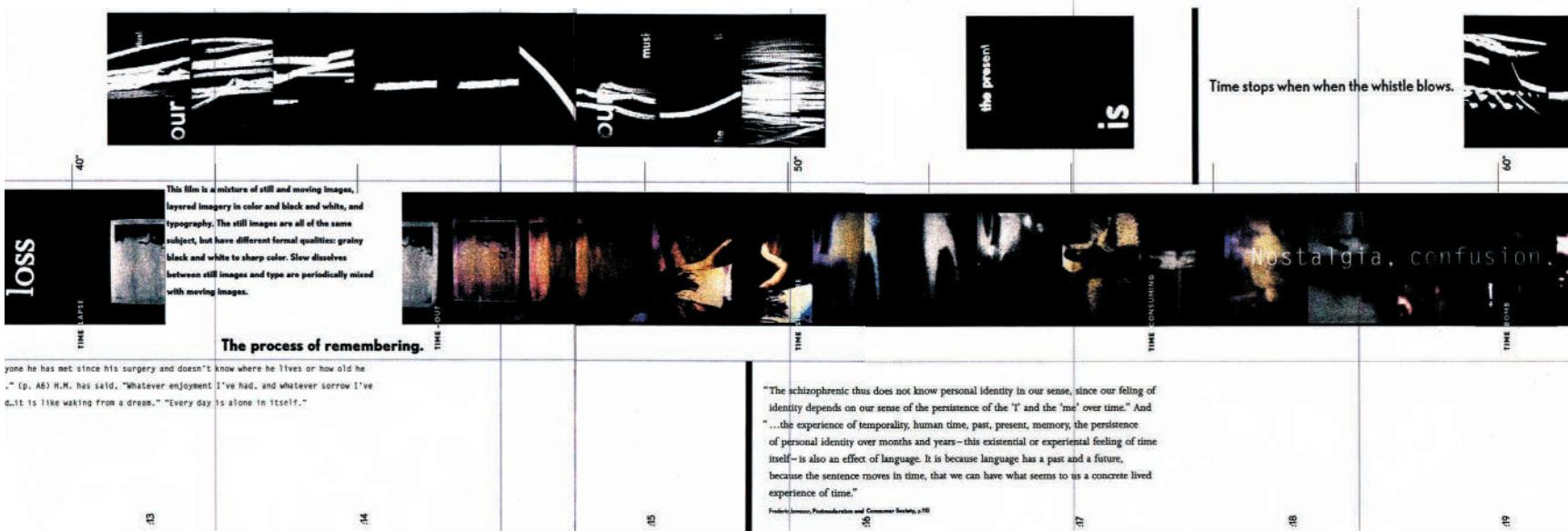
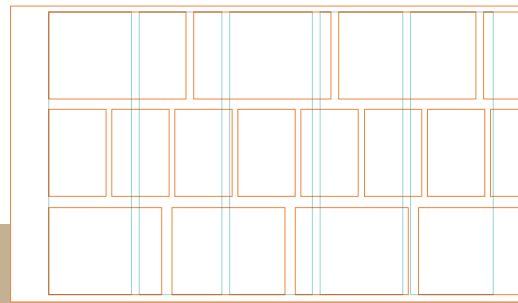
\_\_\_ The type is subservient to the formal

dynamism of the pictorial elements' angular construction and their organization on the page; it takes some cues from the architecture (most notably on the cover) but remains spare, condensing in a scale progression from triangular and rectilinear planes (A, N, E, W, and the word groups they make up) to a single line that travels succinctly across the interior.



## Grid Deconstruction / Splicing / Narrative Allusion

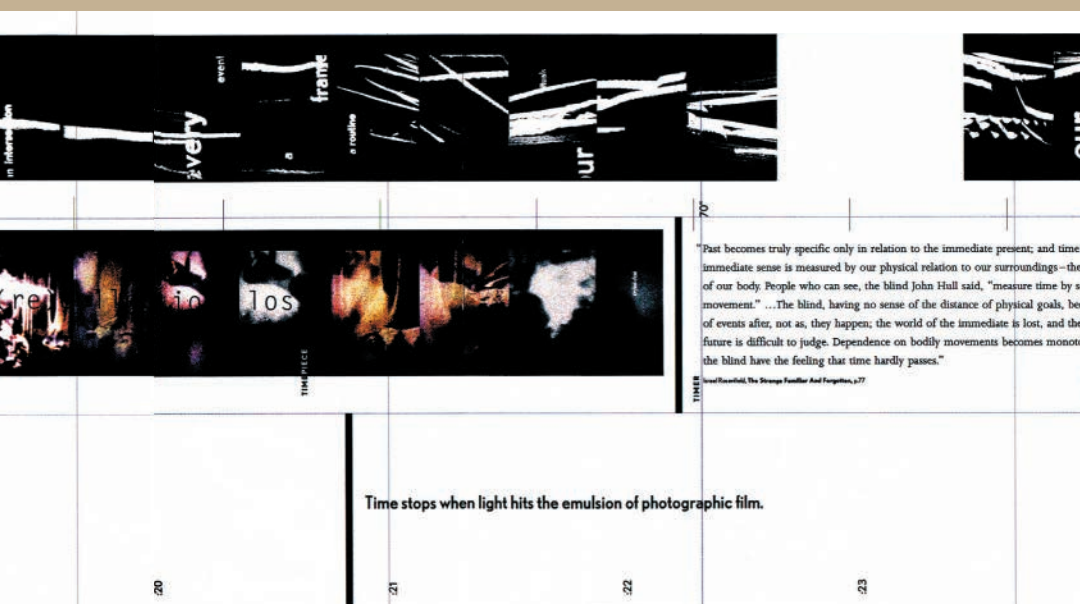
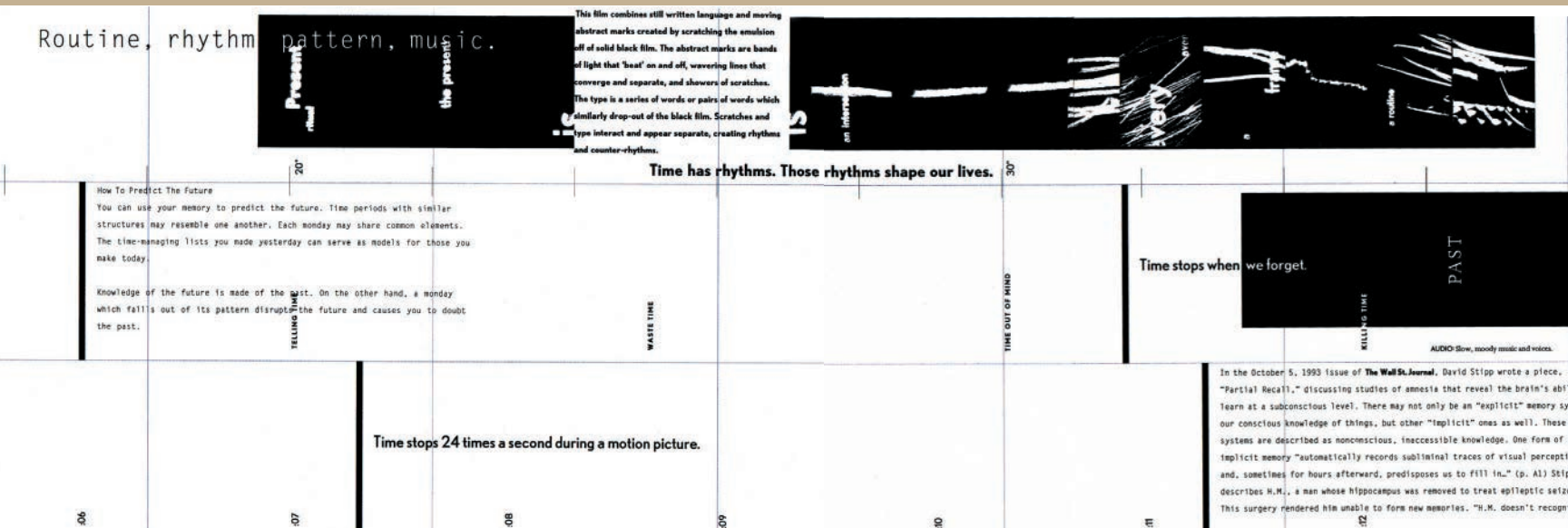
This book documents three related films about the subject of time, which are simultaneously exhibited in a closed environment. \_\_\_\_ Each film is concerned with a different aspect of time: past, present, or future. The book's long, narrow, horizontal format acts as a metaphor for the linear representation of time, much the way a storyboard or score for a film would. Increments in time, as indicated by the frame count of each film displayed in linear sequence on the page, are the organizing principle.



Jennifer Bernstein  
New York, NY | USA

Film exhibition document,  
part of an MFA thesis

02 03 05 06 07 13 16  
18 19 21 25 26 27 29  
34 35  
02 05 08 10 11 13 17  
18 20 22 24 25 30 31  
35

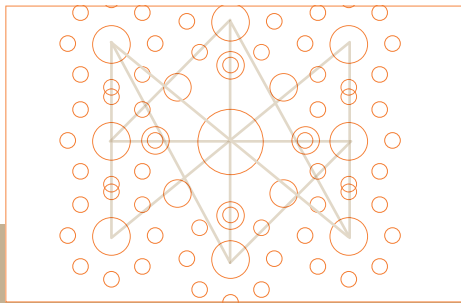


In the exhibition, each film begins and ends in some relation to the other two; in the book, the running text of the essay, as well as the frame sequences of the films, begin in the same relationship: staggered in relationship to each other and staggered in terms of duration and interval. Columns of text follow the frame counts and timing of significant film events that overlap each other and move in synchrony.

\_\_\_ The time increments, film events, and frame counts are marked as informational elements, but also form a visual overlay of staggered black rules to give movement and rhythm to the sequence across the panels.



## Multiple / Radial, Framed, Networked, Spontaneous

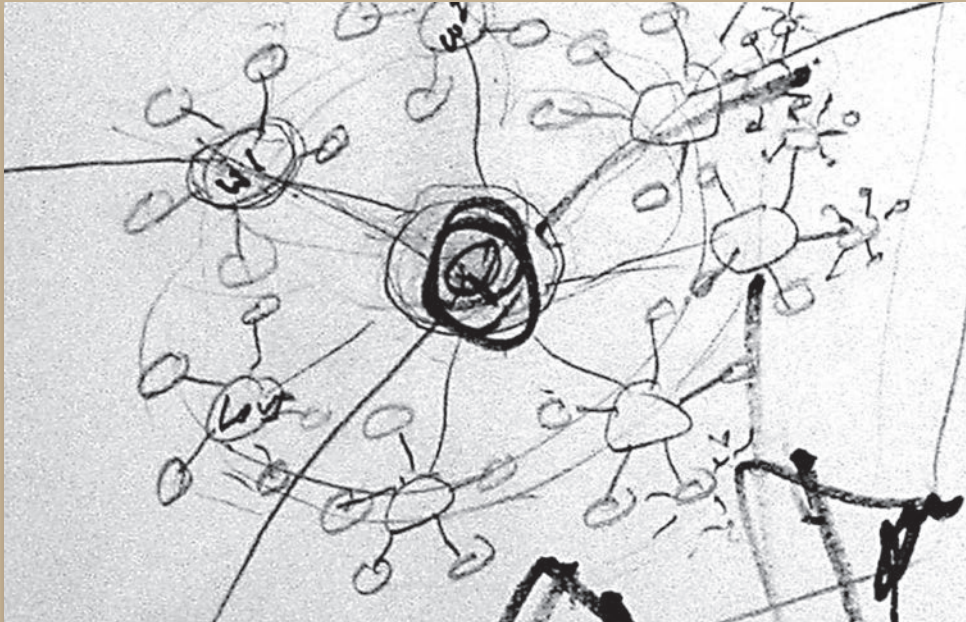


### OVERVIEW

An interactive interface built as a dynamic map of consciousness for a group called The Collective Wisdom Initiative

### EXHIBIT COMPARISONS

01 02 08 10 11 22 28  
29 31 33  
21 22 28

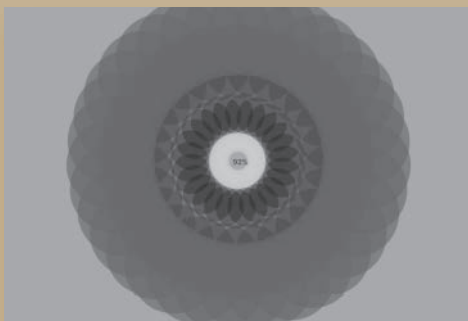


This project responded to the question “How do we come together in order to touch, or be touched by, the intelligence we need?” The challenge: To give form to something formless that is an intimate part of being, and of being related. The design team’s response was to make the user an active part of the experience through interaction with a dynamic map. Most interfaces are linear in design because their goal is to disseminate information to the user in a convenient manner. The team intuited that content of an experiential nature rendered such linearity less useful.

\_\_\_ The design is a non-hierarchical structure of conceptual “cells,” each an organized principle and interlinked sub-particle that fosters a perceptual engagement with words and images in a kind of fluctuating haiku, a gentle co-motion in time and space. This holistic “hub” conception applies to the entire interface language. Interaction is with objects in constant flux.

\_\_\_ In concrete terms, users encounter the hub and select links to explore; as they do so, shapes and word particles coalesce to form content, which can act as further links—bringing out new shapes, images, and text links—or redirect the user to the hub for additional connections. Links are programmed to randomize the parts along with a few controls so the viewer discovers new and unexpected relationships. That dynamism empowers the participant with possibilities and co-creation. In paying attention, there is the possibility of surprise, which stimulates spontaneity and play. Every experience therefore enables fresh insights.

\_\_\_ As the project director describes it: “The true depth of what the map has to offer lies in the poetic grace of the experience itself, of being in the moment as an active participant and co-creator, and not in the world of expectation and ... consumption.”





**Design Director—**  
Thomas Ockerse [Program  
Head, Graduate Studies in  
Graphic Design, RISD]

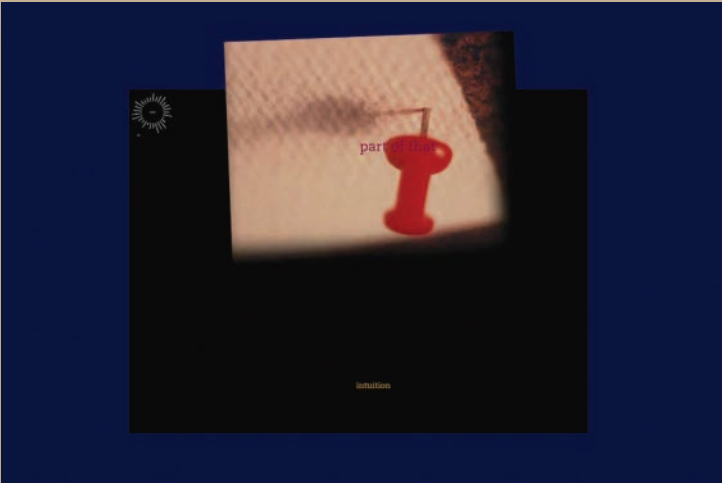
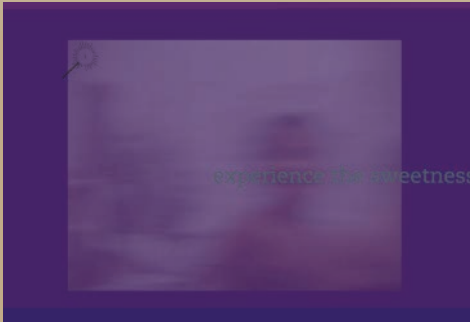
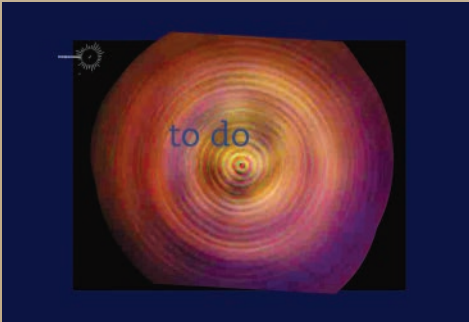
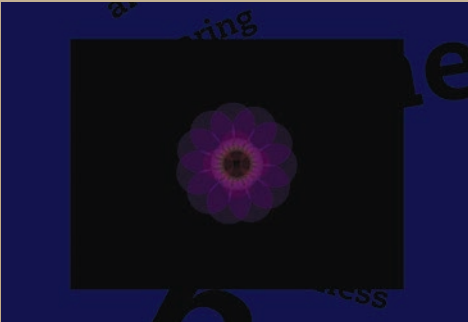
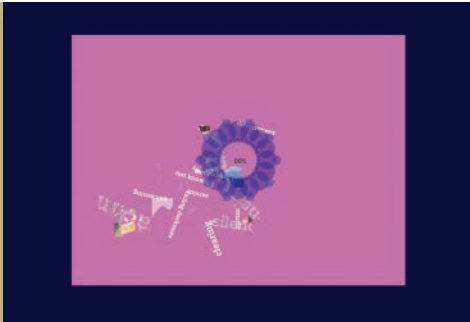
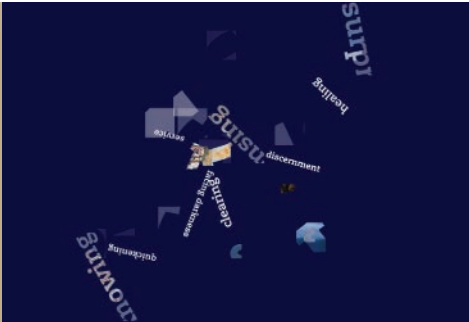
Providence, RI | USA

**Designers—**  
Danniel Gaidula, Stephanie Grey,  
Soe Lin Post [graduate students  
in Graphic Design, RISD]

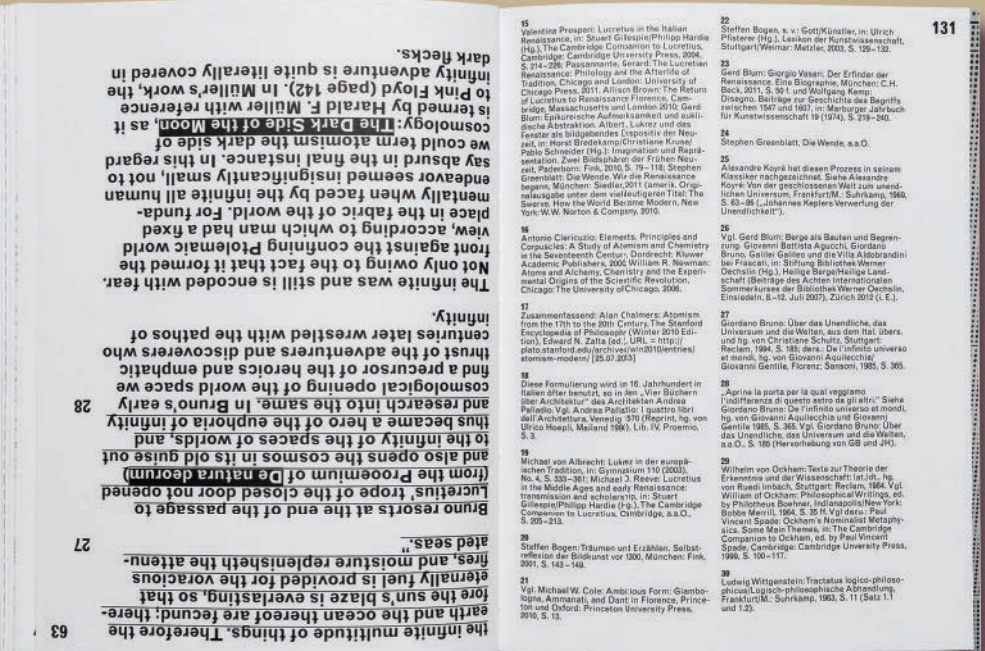
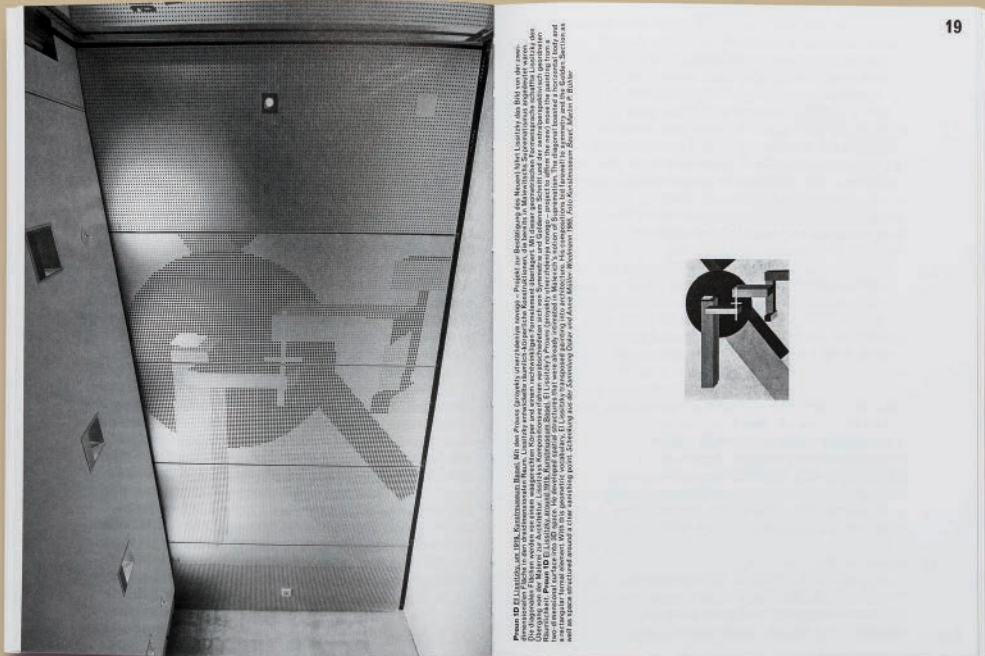
**Digital Programmer—**  
Danniel Gaidula  
**Design Assistant—**  
Ho Eun Ahn [graduate student  
in Graphic Design, RISD]

**Thinking Partner—**  
Anne West [Adjunct Faculty,  
Graduate Studies, RISD]

**In concert with—**  
Sheryl Erickson [Project Director  
for the Fetzer Institute Collective  
Wisdom Initiative]



Grid Deconstruction / Manuscript, Column / Reversal



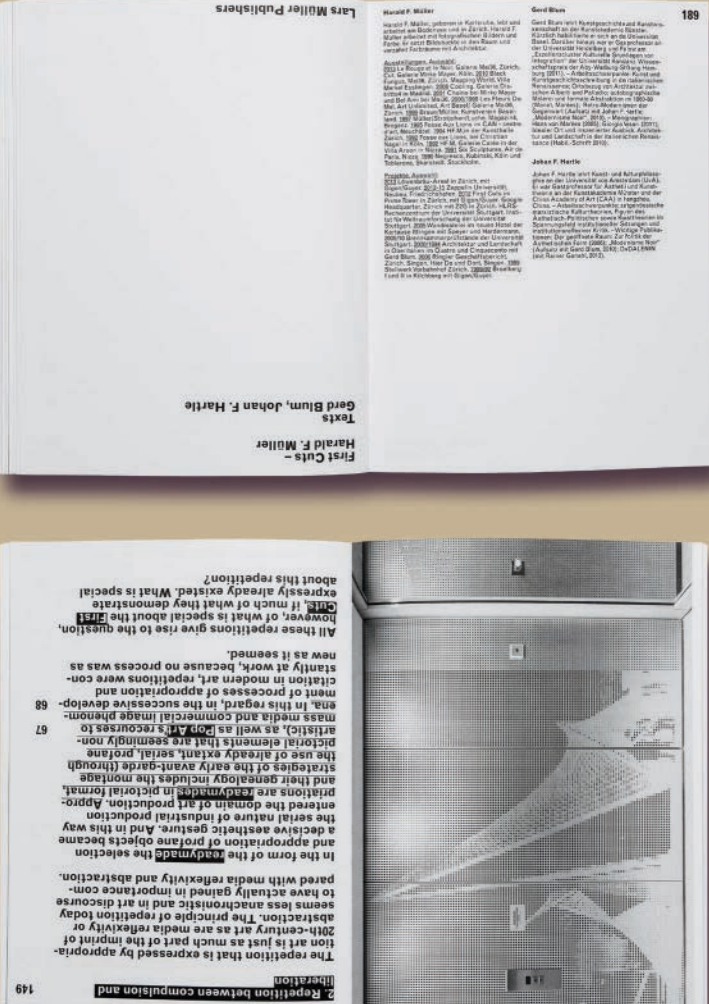
To begin, a disclaimer: Technically, there is a grid of sorts in use here. It's included in this section because the grid is inconsequential—the relationship between body and margins is almost default in proportion, and the two-page structures (manuscript, two-column) don't relate to each other. What is important, however, is its bold, irreverent deconstruction of editorial conventions.

Text runs top to bottom, as expected, but also from bottom—to top. Sometimes, it's even set backward—as though it exists on a transparent plane of glass, and one is reading it from behind. The pages appear to be randomly numbered; in actuality, the pages have been moved from their contiguous sequences to new locations, carrying their page numbers with them.

Within the text, the designers exaggerate notational conventions like in-line citations and cross-references with underlines and dark blocks; these callouts do actually function as links between parts of text, or between one essay and another; as well as between the text of this book and the works it references. The visual effect is almost interactive, like early Web navigation links.

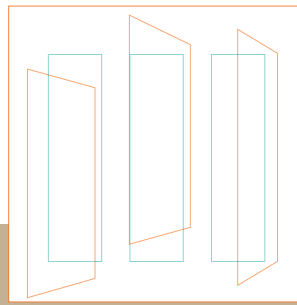
When images appear, they are purposely disconnected from the text layout. Most often, they bleed a full page on a spread, but on occasion appear as small insets; in either case, they are rotated 90°. Captions for them extend from foot margin to head margin, running in the gutter.







## Grid Deconstruction / Deformation / Spontaneous Composition



The identity and print materials for a dance company in New York follow no grid ... nor are there any horizontal or strictly vertical elements at all. The system is completely spontaneous, operating off the expression that begins in the logo. Its letters, liberated from the flat, static confines of two-dimensional space, fly against each other like the dancers in the company's performances.

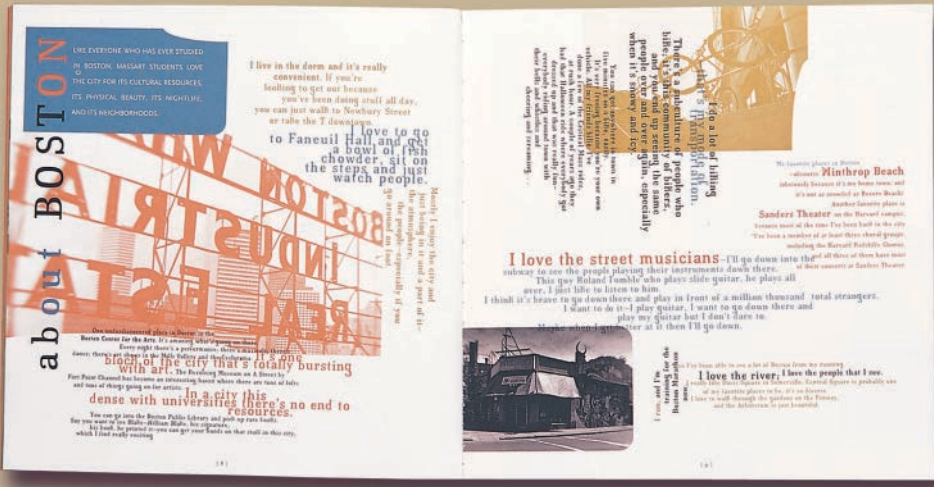
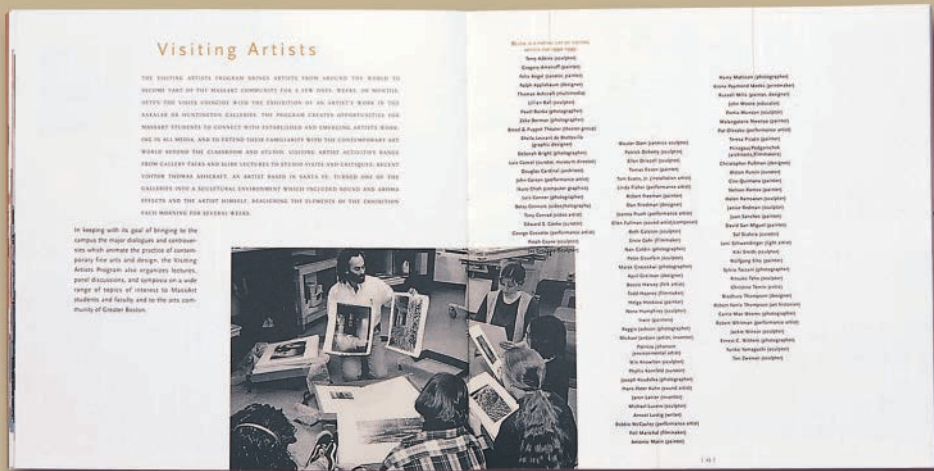
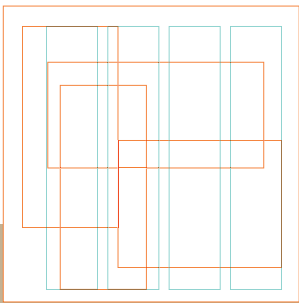
\_\_\_ No typography in the system is standardized in terms of placement or size, although the same type family unites all of the materials. The invitation to an opening night gala incorporates photography of dancers collaged with three-dimensional typography that tilts forward and back in space. The random width of the "columns" of type interact with the figures around them in a rhythmic movement across the panels.



Logo and stationery design courtesy of Valerie Pettib, Pettibutts, LLC. Printing courtesy of Philip Morris Companies Inc.



# Grid Deconstruction / Splicing / Spontaneous Composition

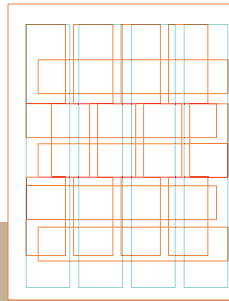


This course catalogue relies on multiple structural ideas to convey the experimental, exploratory, and often antiestablishment environment of an art school. The overlap of images, type, and integration of several different alignment structures serves as a metaphor for the interaction of different artistic disciplines, as well as divorcing the institution from its counterparts: nonarts educational universities.

\_\_\_ The first few spreads are seductively simple. Misalignments in the columns of the table of contents and the mission statement, while unorthodox, only hint at the upcoming dynamics. Beginning with the descriptive section about the surrounding city, each section takes on its own organizational qualities. Sometimes a few center-axis columns hang from the top of the page, sometimes there are no columns. Course information begins in a four-column structure but quickly dissolves into clusters of staggered lines, ignoring hanglines and, in some cases, running horizontally across the gutter of the spread.

\_\_\_ Photographs and artwork are arranged as both foreground and background elements. Sometimes they are presented in black and white, as journalistic evidence; at others, they appear as color-tinted planes floating behind running text. No consistent alignments, but the pages hold together in a clean, direct sort of tension where the visual qualities of the images and shapes are played against each other.



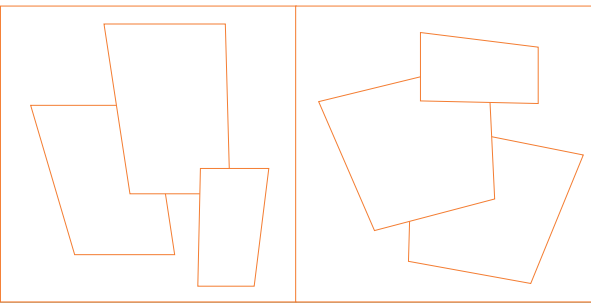


Clean geometric abstraction—semicircles, arcs, lines, and dots—and a fresh, unstudied approach to the composition of elements govern the layout of information for this brochure. Dramatic negative spaces surround and interact with clustered forms and freely composed units of typographic information in a “dance” around the format.

\_\_\_ The information is accessible, despite its playful structure, because each part of the information is decisively located. Individual thoughts or components of information are separated from each other so the eye can access them easily.

\_\_\_ Dynamic variation in the scale, shape, and proximity of elements creates a natural movement across the spreads, keeping the reader interested and helping to link successive paragraphs or ideas in an intuitive and easy-to-follow manner. This organizational method can be very successful when the informational requirements of the project are not too demanding.

Grid Deconstruction / Deformation / Narrative Allusion



THE IRRELEVANT PROCESS In general, bias in the selection of elements for a chance image can be avoided by using a method of selection of those elements which is independent of the characteristics of interest in the elements themselves. The method should preferably give an irregular and unforeseen pattern of selection.

John Cage has used this approach in a composition for orchestra, ruling a staff on a sheet of paper, and placing notes on the staff at points where certain minute imperfections in the paper occur. Inked marbles rolled over an irregular surface trace a pattern determined by unforeseen imperfections in the surface and chance rebounds of the marbles from each other.

More remotely, significant images occur as the result of processes over which we exercise no selection at all. The most moving collage I ever experienced was the 4 x 24 foot side of a truck carrying boilers, a piece of canvas patched irregularly with other pieces of canvas of various shades of gray. Map patterns, and the classical object trousers, would also seem ineluctable within this principle.

CHANCE Chance in the arts provides a means for escaping the biases engrained in our personality by our culture and personal past history, that is, it is a means of attaining greater generality. The result is a method of approach with wide application. The methods of chance and randomness can be applied to the selection and arrangement of sounds by the composer; to movement and pace by the dancer; to three dimensional form by the sculptor; to surface form and color by the painter; to linguistic elements by the poet. Science tells us that the universe is what we conceive it to be, and chance enables us to determine what we conceive it to be (for the conception is only partly conscious). The repertoire of forms available to the artist thus becomes open ended, and eventually embraces all of nature, for the recognition of significant form becomes limited only by the observer's self. It must be obvious too that the infinite range of application of these methods is compounded when the matter of materials is also considered, and this is a subject we have only incidentally touched on here. One hopes that so called avant garde painters will some day look beyond the classical oil medium with the same open minded receptivity that, say, Pierre Schaeffer did in his field, in 1948.

AN AFTER-THOUGHT In 1957, when this article was written, I had only recently met John Cage and had not yet seen clearly that the most important implications of chance lay in his work rather than in Pollock's. Nor could I have foreseen the resolution of the distinction between choice and chance which was to occur in my own work. We are eight years farther on the spiral, and I prefer work to re-work. "Chance Imagery" is presented in the form in which it was originally written.

November, 1965

PROPROGRAMMATIC

Do you know what the title of the article means? The title of the article can be explained by reference to the article itself. A programme can be designed for naming the article. For this one must know what the article is about. The subject, at any rate, is creative arrangement. But that is too general. As the author sees it, there are two separate aspects to creative arrangement: the design, to design, the designer, etc. and the programme, to programme, programmer, etc. Well then, design, to design, Programme? No. The "and" is too weak. The two ideas are more closely linked than that. Programme? Design? Design Programme? No. Both are dependent on each other. Which on which? Each on each. Design of the Programme? Programme of the Design? No. To be sure, the meaning of both is clear. But what is essential lies in between. It lies in the designation of the two ideas. The principal question, then, is the connection between the two words. It can be expressed through any kind of linguistic link. For the reciprocal action of programme and design should be as complete as possible. The solution: to enumerate all the possible ways in which these concepts can be connected. And to consider all these cover. Design of Programme, Programme for Design, Design of Programme, Programme.

The title can be explained in different terms. Designing programmes can also mean: inventing rules of arrangement. Taking a chemical combinations by reference to a kind of formula. The formula is responding to this conception. The traditional structure of language is dissolved. No grammar. No syntax. The elements are single words. They stand loose in the line with all their valencies free. The rule of the game is the permutation. The poems arising are called constellations. There is an example in this book.

Another example of a programme (and as usual certain rules for combining them): four pictorial Swiss jass cards. The rules of the game are printed on cards. And, considered in these terms, every other game is nothing more than the carrying out of a programme.

More self-evident still, and hence all the less consciously present in one's mind: the formula of the recipe. First the elements are enumerated: take . . . potatoes, milk, water, salt, and butter. Then the preparation: peeling, cutting up, boiling, straining, stir-frying . . . Results: creamed potatoes. The recipe is the programme. Simple enough. But interpreting many of these programmes is more difficult. And when it comes to designing them, then the difficulties really begin. That is why it is called an art. The culinary art. And then there is still the whole menu to cook: one programme superimposed on another. The full score is a cookery book.

JACKSON POLLOCK  
Jackson Pollock's first show was held at Peggy Guggenheim's gallery in 1943. Here he was able to associate with the proponents of that "sacred disorder" which was later to become the key to his own original style. "To them Pollock owed his radical new sense of freedom, and he spoke more than once of his debt to their unpremeditated and automatic methods. By elevating the appeal to chance and accident into a first principle of creation, the Surrealists had circumvented the more rigid formalisms of modern art." (1) It is not difficult to find their influence in Pollock's paintings of the war years (for example, "Guardians of the Secret," 1943). Pollock achieved a profound, sustained and irrational synthesis of all the principles which had preceded him in Dada, and in a way consistent with his contemporary world. His paintings seem much less manifestations of one of a group of techniques for releasing the unconscious (as the Dada experiments seemed), than they do of a single, integrated use of chance as a means of unlocking the deepest possible grasp of nature in its broadest sense.

variables involved in determining the flow of fluid paint from a source not in contact with the canvas cannot possibly be simultaneously taken into account with sufficient omniscience that the exact configuration of the paint when it hits the canvas can be predicted. Some of these variables, for example, are the paint viscosity, density, rate of flow at any instant; and direction, speed and configuration of the applicator, to say nothing of non-uniformity in the paint. Even if we deny enumeration, and claim omniscience for an unconscious moulded by a long learning period, it is obvious that in some of Pollock's paintings of this period (in "One, 1950," for example) differently colored streams of paint have flowed into each other after application, resulting in a commingling completely out of the artist's hands. Never before Pollock were chance processes used with such primary, consistency and integrity, as valuable sources of affective imagery.

The Second World War helped to disperse the European Dadaists and Surrealists, and many of the most original artists-Breton, Ernst, Tanguy, Masson-regrouped in New York, particularly around two New York galleries, the Julien Levy Gallery and Peggy Guggenheim's Art of This Century.

Paintings get to be what they are physically through an interaction of method and material, and they have their effect in an interaction between painting and observer. As far as the observer is concerned, Pollock has demonstrated that the "ability of humans to appreciate complex chance images is almost unlimited. Here I would like to introduce the general term "chance imagery" to apply to our formation of images resulting from chance, wherever these occur in nature. (The word "imagery" is intentionally ambiguous enough, I think, to apply either to the physical act of creating an image out of real materials, or to the formation of an image in the mind, say by abstraction from a more complex system.) One reason for doing this is to place the painter's, musician's, poet's, dancer's chance images in the same conceptual category as natural chance images (the configuration of meadow grasses, the arrangement of stones on a brook bottom), and to get away from the idea that an artist makes some thing very "special" and beyond the world of ordinary things. An Alpine peak or an iris petal can move us at times with all the subtle power of a "Night Watch" or one of the profound themes of Opus 131. There is no a priori reason why moving images should originate only with artists.

When an artist achieves this uncontrived consensus with all of nature, every-thing that he has put off from nature. Here, here.

... the fact that good European moderns are now here is very important, for they bring with them an understanding of the problems of modern painting. I am particularly impressed with their concept of the source of art being the unconscious. This idea interests me more than these specific painters do."

Aside from the lack of conscious control of paint application in these paintings, there are technical reasons for looking at this complex of interdependent forms as predominantly chance events. For one thing, the infinite number of variables involved in determining the flow of fluid paint from a source not in contact with the canvas cannot possibly be simultaneously taken into account with sufficient omniscience that the exact configuration of the paint when it hits the canvas can be predicted. Some of these variables, for example, are the paint viscosity, density, rate of flow at any instant; and direction, speed and configuration of the applicator, to say nothing of non-uniformity in the paint. Even if we deny enumeration, and claim omniscience for an unconscious moulded by a long learning period, it is obvious that in some of Pollock's paintings of this period (in "One, 1950," for example) differently colored streams of paint have flowed into each other after application, resulting in a commingling completely out of the artist's hands. Never before Pollock were chance processes used with such primary, consistency and integrity, as valuable sources of affective imagery.

Pollock's calligraphy was truly automatic and second that there is a considerable element of chance in the ultimate arrangement of pigment in the chance paintings of roughly 1947-1951.

first, part of a statement by Pollock, made in 1947: "When I am in my painting, I'm not aware of what I'm doing. It is only after a sort of 'get acquainted' period that I see what I have been about."

Again, from an earlier statement: "... the fact that good European moderns are now here is very important, for they bring with them an understanding of the problems of modern painting. I am particularly impressed with their concept of the source of art being the unconscious. This idea interests me more than these specific painters do."

Aside from the lack of conscious control of paint application in these paintings, there are technical reasons for looking at this complex of interdependent forms as predominantly chance events. For one thing, the infinite number of variables involved in determining the flow of fluid paint from a source not in contact with the canvas cannot possibly be simultaneously taken into account with sufficient omniscience that the exact configuration of the paint when it hits the canvas can be predicted. Some of these variables, for example, are the paint viscosity, density, rate of flow at any instant; and direction, speed and configuration of the applicator, to say nothing of non-uniformity in the paint. Even if we deny enumeration, and claim omniscience for an unconscious moulded by a long learning period, it is obvious that in some of Pollock's paintings of this period (in "One, 1950," for example) differently colored streams of paint have flowed into each other after application, resulting in a commingling completely out of the artist's hands. Never before Pollock were chance processes used with such primary, consistency and integrity, as valuable sources of affective imagery.

Pollock, One 1950



**Andrea Vazquez**  
**Thomas Ockerse, Instructor**  
 Providence, RI | USA

**Editorial system for design  
 journal *Cut and Paste*;  
 student project**

**01 03 04 06 08 12 13**  
**16 17 22 24 26 30 33**  
**02 04 05 11 21 22**

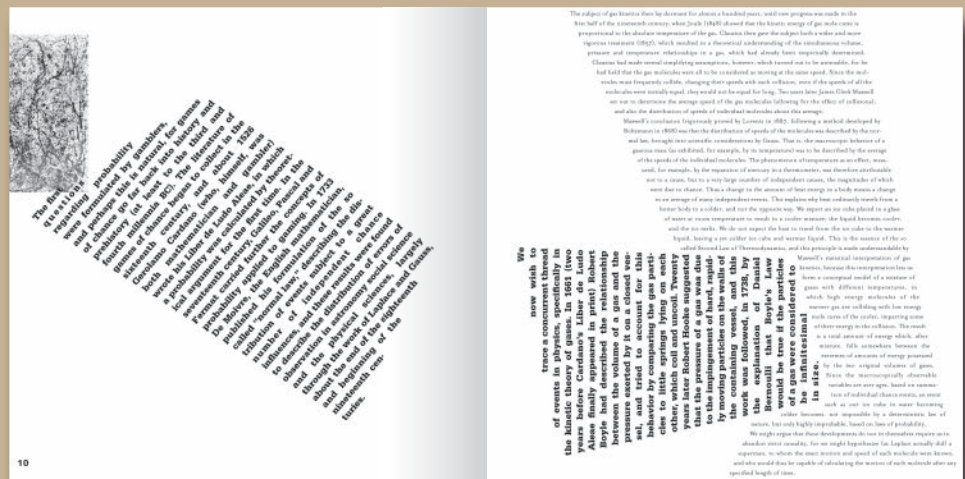
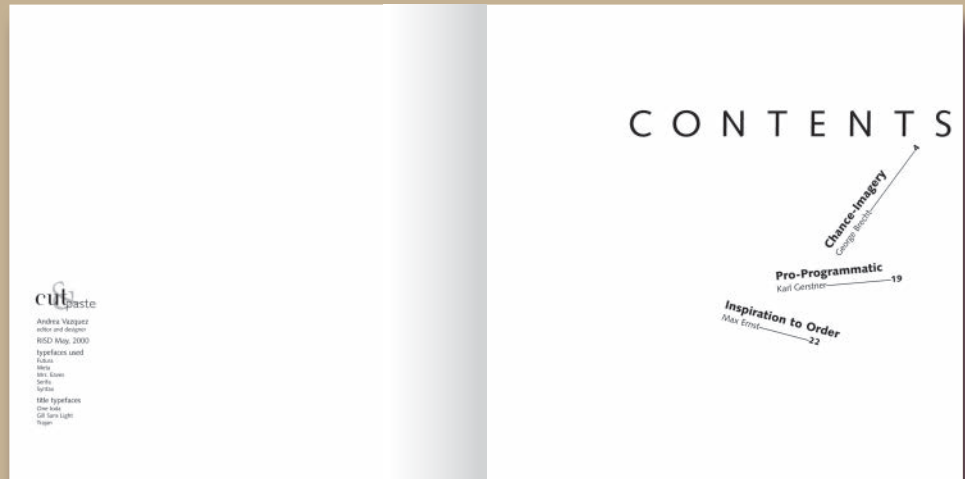
Organized around the principle of collage, this inventive design journal walks a middle ground between apparent chaos and order.

Careful study of cut-paper shapes and their overlaps led to the development of a system for shaping paragraphs and columns of text by deforming their text boxes and, subsequently, for laying them out to ensure readers can navigate without trouble.

A comprehensive design manual provides guidelines for creating the shapes of the text boxes. Reading order depends on a number of variables: the relative positions of each collage shape, the size and orientation of the text within those shapes, and the density of the text on the page. By varying these parameters, the designer is able to control flow through the paragraphs when needed.

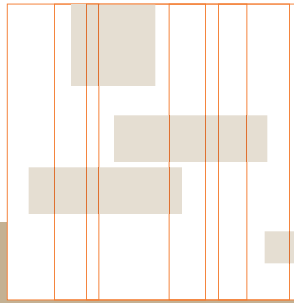
For the most part, the entry point is located more or less toward the upper left of a page or spread, where readers expect it; but if it isn't, it will be found near the location of the most intense optical contrast (in weight or size). From that point, with occasional deviation, reading occurs from top to bottom and left to right. Strong contrasts in style between columns help the reader keep them separate; equally decisive overlaps help direct the eye from one paragraph to another.

The system allows for a great deal of control and tremendous opportunity for discovering new organizational methods for text and image.





## Grid Deconstruction / Splicing / Spontaneous Divisions



### DESIGN

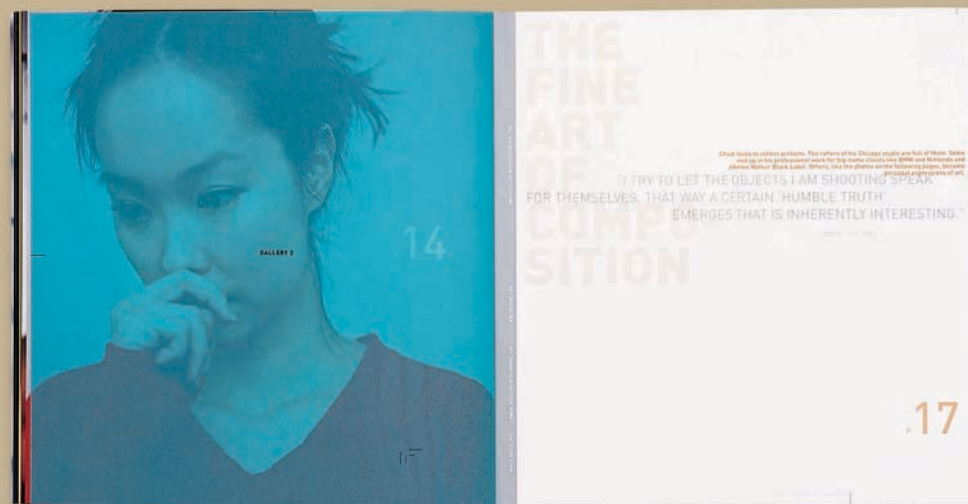
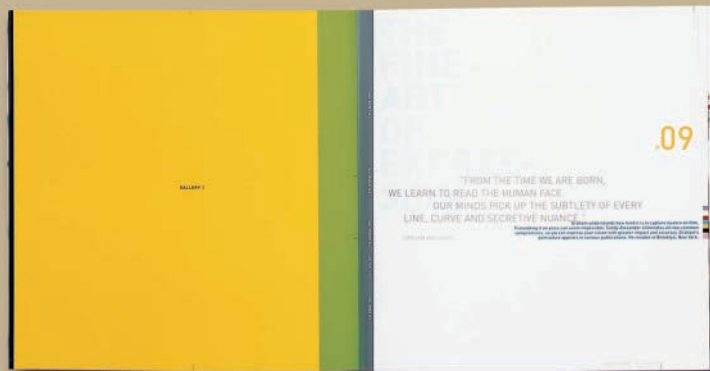
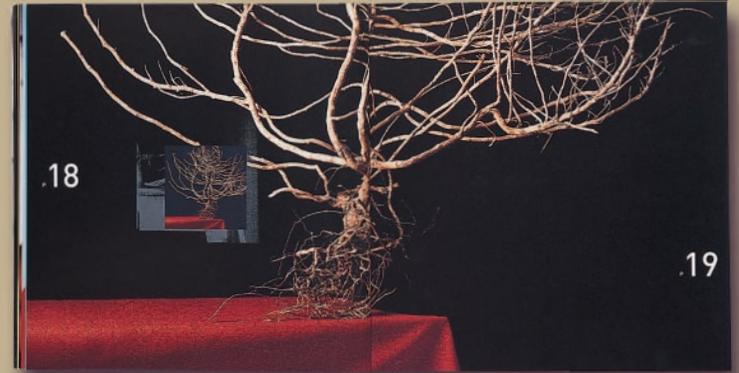
**Ideas on Purpose**  
New York, NY | USA

**Promotional brochure for  
a commercial printer**

### EXHIBIT COMPARISONS

05 07 14 17 18 19 25  
32 34

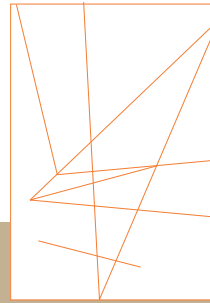
02 04 05 13 18 22 25  
26 30 31 35



Four galleries of photographic reproduction form the primary focus of this printer's show-piece. Each gallery section is devoted to the work of a single photographer and designed around a given theme. Structurally, alignment is minimal, and any alignment that exists is violated in every other spread. Each gallery section relies on its own logic to determine whether the alignments are articulated, but most often the operating logic is optical.

On divider pages, complementary texts alternate between contrasting treatments based on the designer's sensitivity to the qualities of the type in the format. The actual positioning of texts changes, but the same logic applies to each occurrence. Centralized insets play off full-spread bleeds. The structure of individual pages is wrapped up in contrasts of sequencing, scale and color change, cropping and bleed, and surface treatment (matte and reflective).

## Spontaneous Composition / Geometric



### DESIGN

**Frost\*collective**  
Sydney | Australia  
**Poster promoting the  
London International  
Festival of Theatre**

### EXHIBIT COMPARISONS

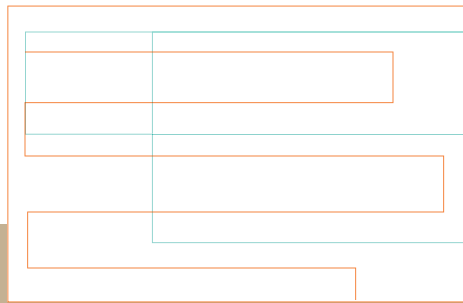
01 03 04 13 15 17 20  
24 26 30  
21 22 27



Intersecting diagonals and sharp angular movements, derived from the juxtaposition of photographic and typographic line elements, create a dynamic organization for the imagery and information in this poster. The designer uses the vertical diagonal of the crane arm and the sudden angle of the overhead street lamp to both disorient the viewer and provide a primary superstructure for the poster. The typography moves upward and outward, with positions for each line determined in part by the superstructure.

\_\_\_ At the same time, the designer counters the tumult with subtle alignments and focal points: The airplane at lower left anchors the composition and creates an optical alignment between lines of information that echo the direction of the superstructure.





**bächlemeid**  
**büro projekte wettbewerbe aktuell**  
**auszeichnung stiftung stadtbild**  
**wettbewerb immenstaad**  
**wir suchen preisverleihung**  
**häuser des jahres 2016**  
**wettbewerb kirchheim**  
**auszeichnung häuser des jahres 2016**  
**wettbewerb wohnen bi**  
**berach dam preis 2015 16**  
**baechlemeid zieht um**  
**bad saulgau bda buch**  
**architektur in baden württemberg**  
**2015 dam deutsches archi**

**bächlemeid**  
**büro projekte wettbewerbe aktuell**  
**alexander heitz lago I** → **haus k** → **alexander heitz k12** → **haus müller** → **haus reichel** → **zum esel** → **haus josefine kramer** → **herren zwicker** → **alexander heitz lago II** → **bodan** → **seaside** → **hanro** → **haus ulmer** → **haus heitz** → **sporthaus zum see** → **schwarzacher hof**

**bächlemeid**  
**büro projekte wettbewerbe aktuell**  
**vorsitzende bda boden see**  
**auszeichn ung stiftung stadtbild**  
**wett bewerb im menstaad**  
**wir suchen preisverleihung**  
**häuser des jahres 2016**  
**wettbewerb kirchheim**  
**aus zeichnung häuser des jahres 2016**  
**wett bewerb woh nen hiberach**



Büro Uebele Visuelle  
Kommunikation  
Stuttgart | Germany

Website for architectural  
and urban planning firm

02 09 11 12 28 32  
04 06 08 16 22 28

# haus k

haus k konstanz  
2015 fertigstellung  
2016 100 deutsche häuser

das bestehende wohngebäude aus dem baujahr 1976 wurde erhalten und mit einer fragilen, temporär und fragmentarisch wirkenden gebäudehülle aus gefalteten kupferstäben überstellt. städtebaulich stellt sich das neue gesamtbauwerk in die reihe der bestehenden nachbargebäude und bietet in den zwischenräumen von bestand und kupferkleid nutzbare zwischenräume, terrassen und zugänge. der grundriss wurde an den innenraumsequenzen mit paraventüren ausgestattet, welche die bestehenden raumfolgen und materialien erkennen lassen aber auch einen fließenden raum ermöglichen.

bächlemeid  
büro  
projekte  
wettbewerbe  
aktuell

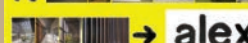


## bächlemeid projekte

alexander  
heitz lago I



→ haus



→ alex

ander heitz

k12

→ haus mül

ler

## haus k

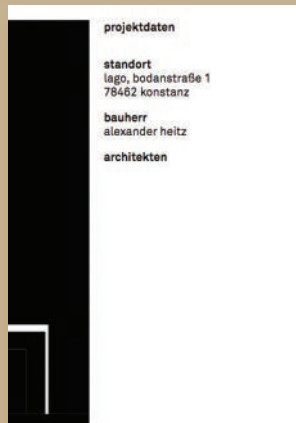
haus k konstanz  
2015 fertigstellung  
2016 100 deutsche häuser

das bestehende wohngebäude aus dem baujahr 1976 wurde erhalten und mit einer fragilen, temporär und fragmentarisch wirkenden gebäudehülle aus gefalteten kupferstäben überstellt. städtebaulich stellt sich das neue gesamtbauwerk in die reihe der bestehenden nachbargebäude und bietet in den zwischenräumen von bestand und kupferkleid nutzbare zwischenräume, terrassen und zugänge. der grundriss wurde an den innenraumsequenzen mit paraventüren ausgestattet, welche die bestehenden raumfolgen und materialien erkennen lassen aber auch einen fließenden raum ermöglichen.

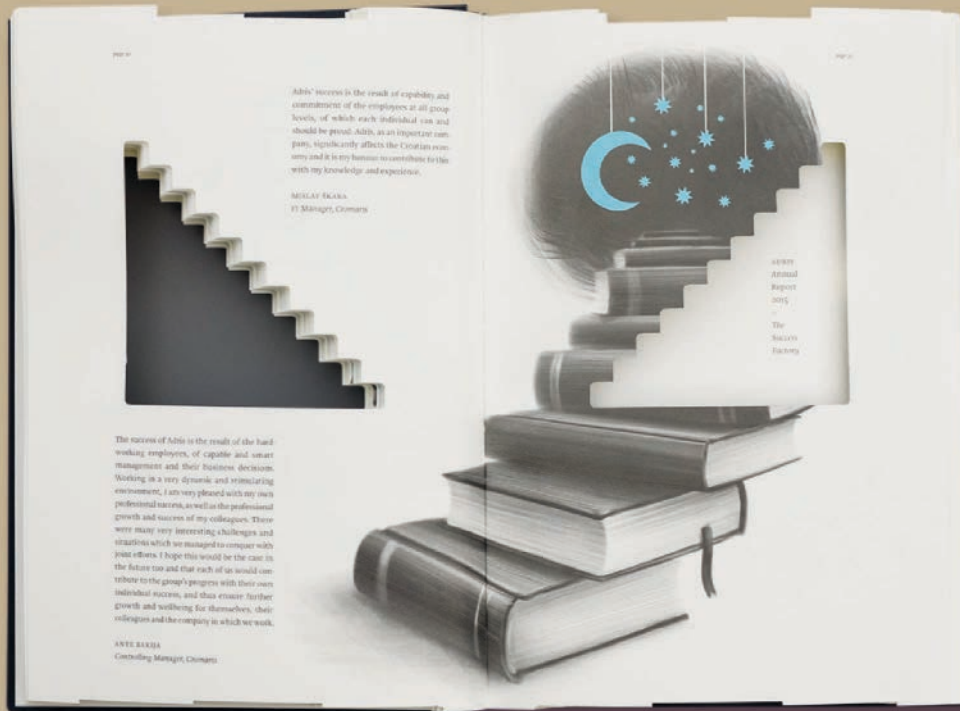
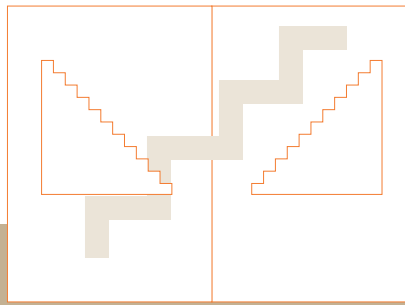


In contrast to most architects' websites—which typically involve ordered grids—this one presents navigation and content as an undifferentiated list that flows from top of page to bottom. The list is set in a custom typeface—based on a redrawing of a clean sans serif font by hand. The continuity of the list is interrupted by stark yellow highlights, notations of awards for projects or their appearance in publication, and images of the projects themselves. The images act as links to individual pages that describe the projects in-depth. On the landing page, all the images associated with a project appear, in order of their arrangement on the project page.

The project pages follow a different logic, but one similar to the undifferentiated list of the landing page: The pages scroll horizontally, and present text and images as a contiguous sequence, without concern for how they relate to the browser's edges. In a small format, for instance, as on a smartphone, the text initially appears to bleed off the right edge of the screen. Project images are all the same height, but cropped in random widths.



## Narrative Allusion / Physical Deformation



Text in this annual report for a real estate developer is completely subordinate to imagery... and the imagery is subordinate to a dimensional cutout that encompasses the depth of the book, affecting all pages before those of the financial section.

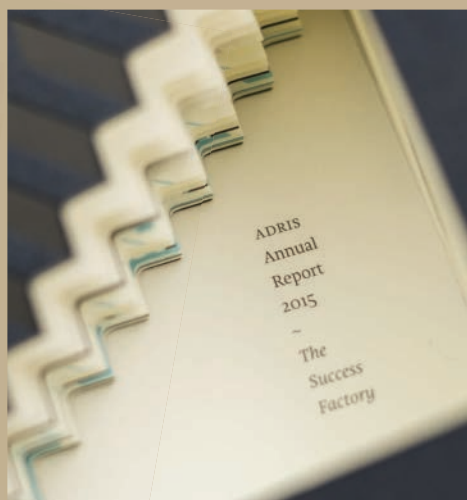
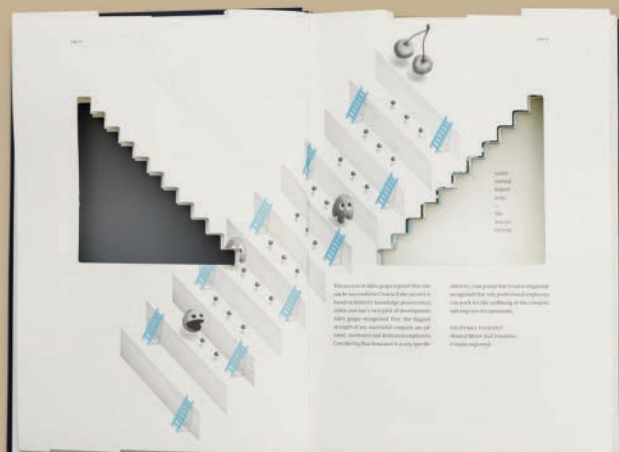
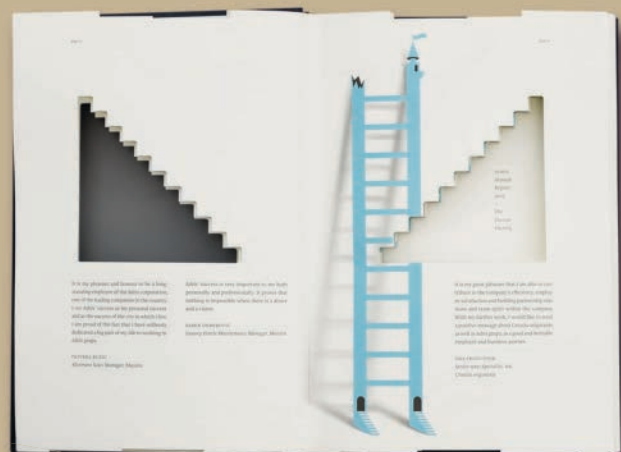
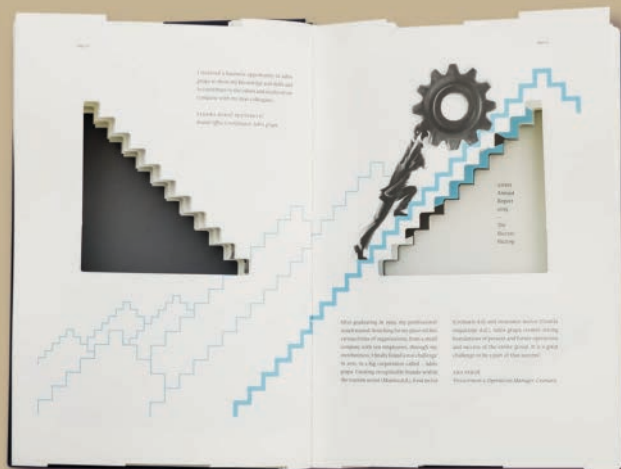
\_\_\_ The cutout creates a stairway, a metaphor for growth and empowerment that forms the report's governing theme, and that is expressed in numerous ways through a variety of illustrations. Doggedly pursuing a single idea throughout a publication can be daunting—continually refreshing it both visually and verbally so that it's always relevant to the discussion requires a strong commitment—never mind having to confront an unavoidable compositional dilemma on every page: the cutout. It limits the area that can accept printing, and it imposes a specific formal condition that must be integrated.

\_\_\_ The designers meet this challenge admirably, incorporating the visible area encompassed by the cutout as a dark- or light-value plane into the illustrations. Often, the illustrative material uses the cutout very directly; sometimes it ignores it; but even when it does, the designers ensure it does so with careful respect for alignments. By altering the scale, value, color distribution, and shaping of each illustration from spread to spread, the designers also ensure the experience is anything but monotonous.

\_\_\_ The typography, as noted, is secondary to all else—set in an elegant serif, printed in a deep gray ink, and distributed among two columns to get out of the imagery's way.

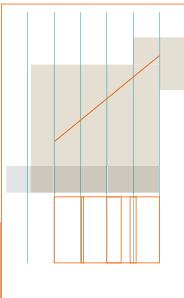








# Grid Deconstruction / Column / Narrative Allusion



DESIGN

Bates Hori

New York, NY | USA

Lecture poster for the

Princeton University

School of Architecture

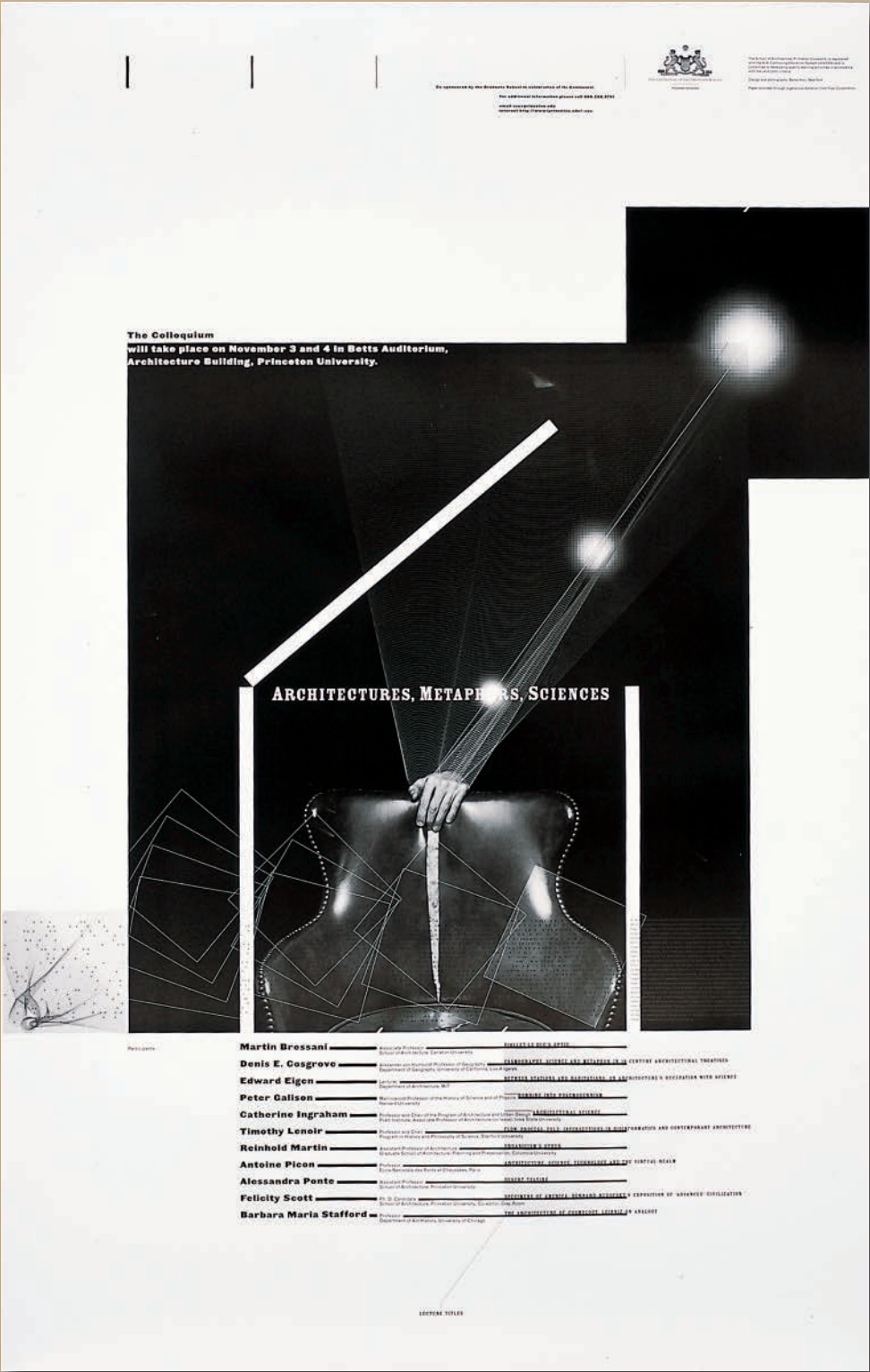
EXHIBIT COMPARISONS

03 04 05 07 13 14 16

21 26 34 35

01 03 06 07 08 10 18

20 25 29 31 32 35



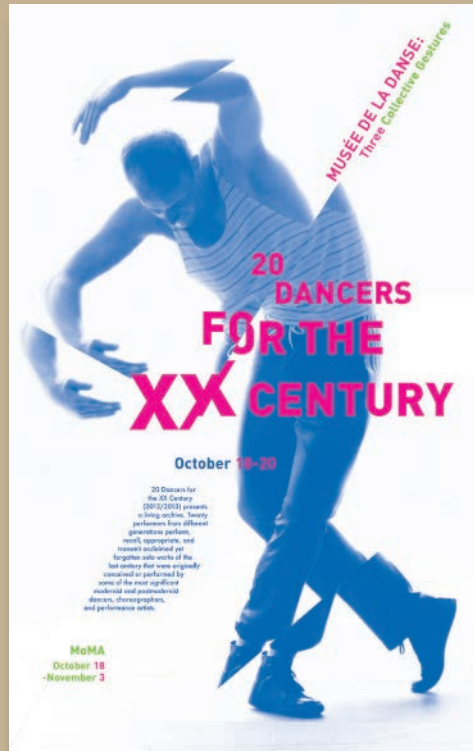
The deconstructive strategies at play in this poster are subtle, to the point that the grid remains visible—or does it? It's not that the grid's components are separated or moved, but hidden to subvert its authority and, even, to question whether it exists. The process of doing so speaks to relevant discussions to be addressed in the colloquium this poster announces.

— There are seven columns. The odd number sets up an apparent symmetry that the designer uses to impart a sense of classicism; but then, he diverts attention with asymmetrical configurations so bold the eye loses the center. The symmetry is foiled again, by the distribution of text across four of the columns, leaving two open at left and only one at right, and through the stepped weights of vertical lines that prevent the appreciation of the columns' regularity.

— The grid shows itself in the house or box that invades the central photograph. Its walls are built from the grid's column gutters... But there are no column gutters. The text elements below the image adhere to the columns' left edges, but bleed beyond their widths to create uncertain relationships in structure. A formless scatter plot at left coalesces into a delicate, ghostly block of text at right, straddling the non-existent column-gutter, and printed at a frustrating level of transparency.

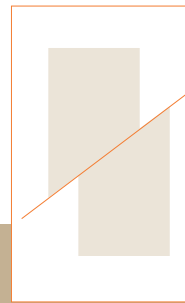
— The purpose of all these sleights of hand may be revealed by the surreal image: It harks back to so-called "fairy photography" of the late 19th century and suggests the stuffy and, sometimes, misguided scientific societies of the same period. The poster positions the field of architecture, and issues about technology and convention to be addressed, in the context of Victorian discussions similarly concerned with the natural and the metaphysical.

## Axis Deconstruction / Diagonal / Image as Source



The formal conceit that drives the compositions of these posters is a diagonal splice—a manipulation that creates movement within the static images. The number of instances of the diagonal splice changes, as does its direction, in each poster. It's such a recognizable visual effect that following a particular angle is almost unimportant as a means of establishing unity in the series; just the fact of it is enough. That flexibility permits the designer to apply the splice as seems best related to each image and to consider the effect of it upon the supporting typography on a case-by-case basis.

\_\_\_ The typography responds to the splice in two ways: larger, upper-level hierarchic elements are fractured across the line, while smaller elements are set as columns, either flush left or flush right, along the splice's axis.



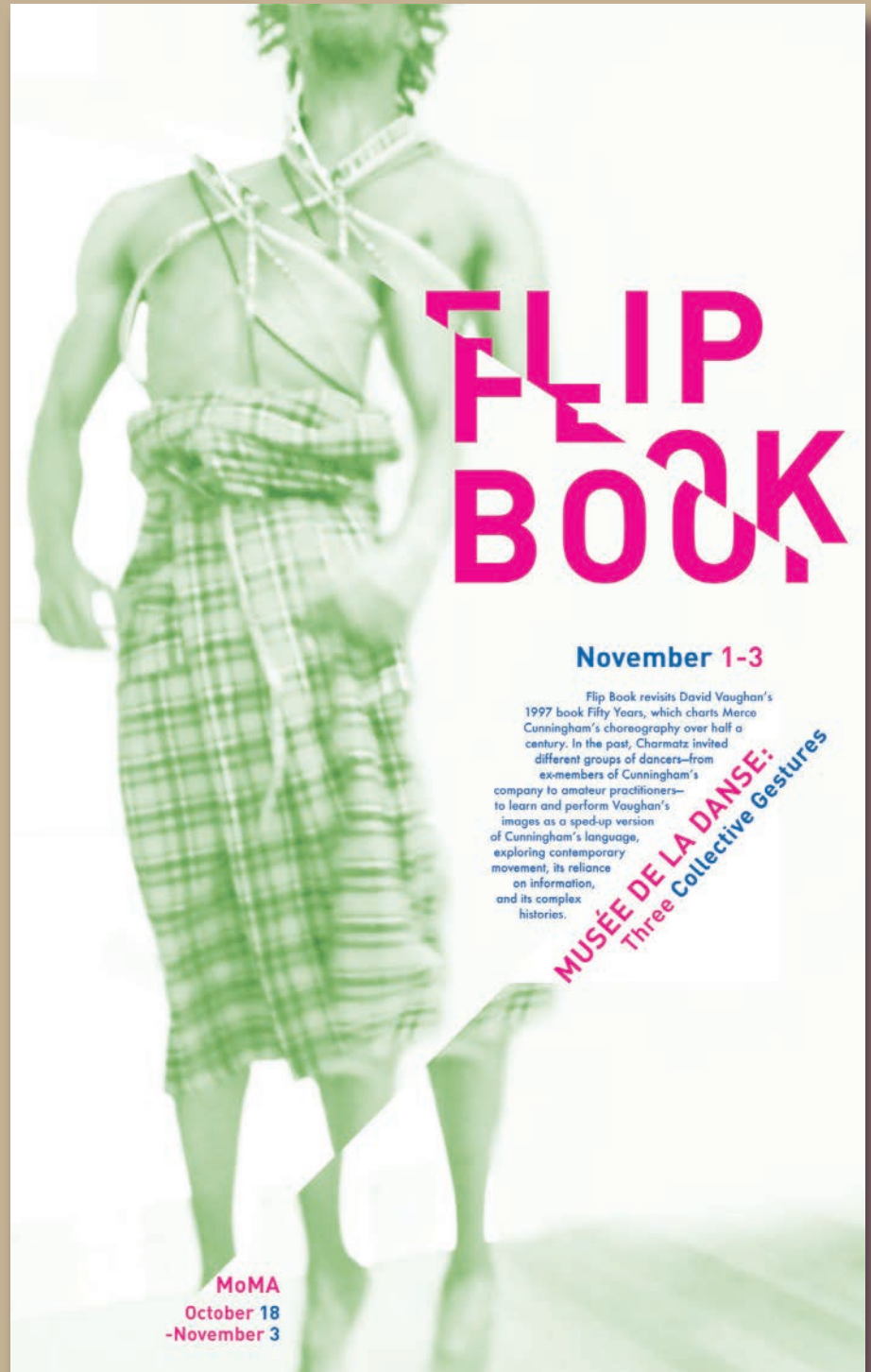
### DESIGN

Kiyoko Shiromasa  
Timothy Samara, Instructor  
New York, NY | USA

Poster series for a dance  
series at the Museum of  
Modern Art; student work

### EXHIBIT COMPARISONS

03 04 06 13 14 17 20  
22 24 34  
25 31





## Spontaneous Composition / Narrative Allusion

### DESIGN

**Level Design Group**  
New York, NY | USA

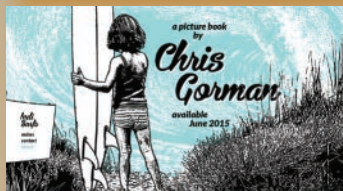
**Website promoting the  
release of a picture book**

### EXHIBIT COMPARISONS

**10 11 14 17 24 28 29**  
**30**  
**05 12 22**

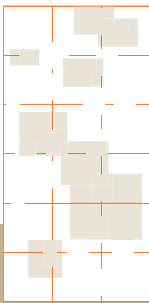


The layout of this website is based primarily on the visual relationships between illustrative elements within the frame. Their style refers to the aesthetics of a particular time and place, relevant to the story told in the novel that the site promotes. Visitors to the site will be delighted by the use of parallax, in which elements move at different rates of speed when the page is scrolled; this creates animated transition between the landing image and those that come into view lower down on the page.



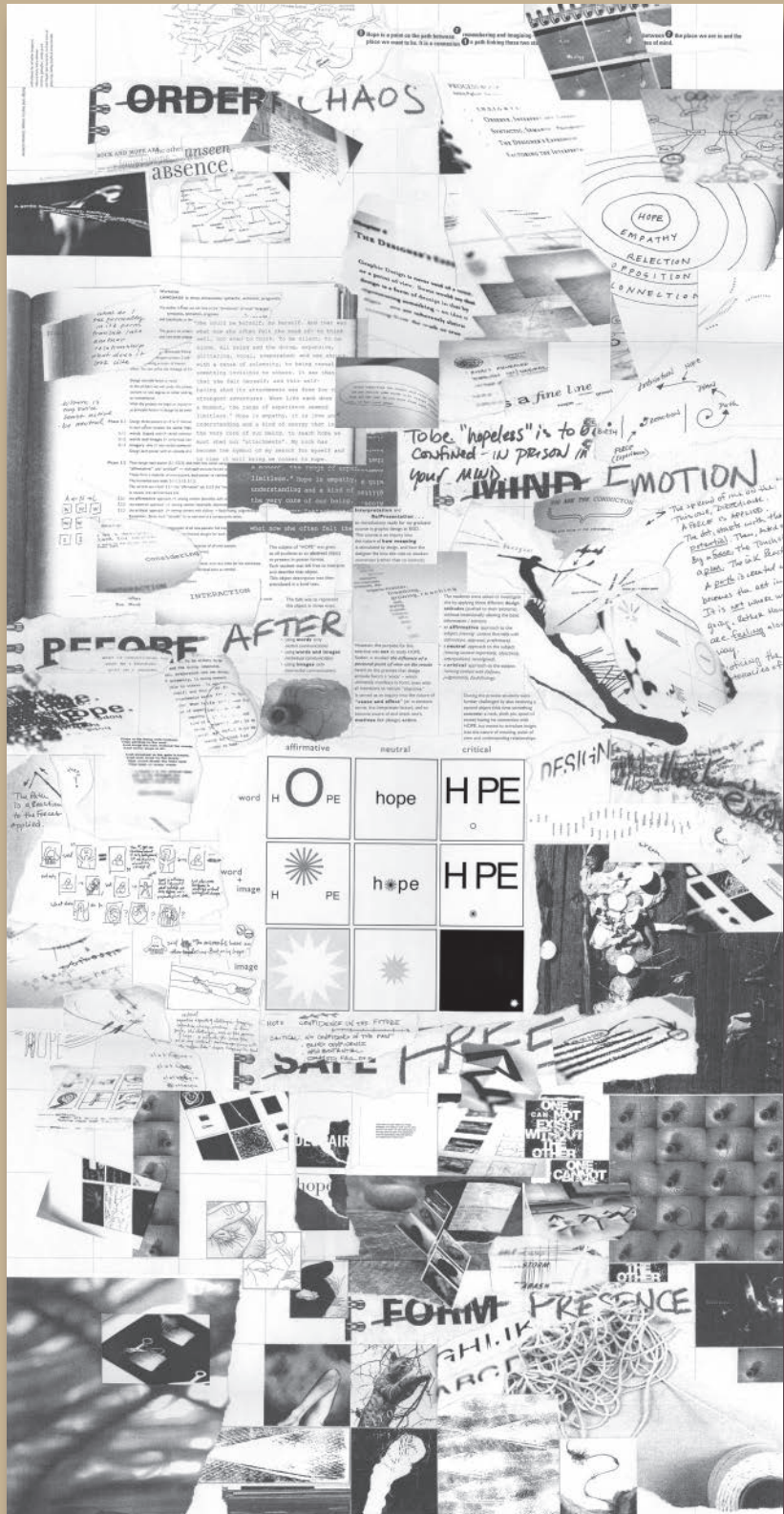


# Narrative Construct / Grid Deconstruction / Spontaneous Composition



DESIGN  
**Thomas Ockerse**  
 Providence, RI | USA  
 Commissioned calendar  
 page for Ahn Graphics, Ltd.  
 in Seoul, Korea

EXHIBIT COMPARISONS  
 01 05 09 15 23 27 31  
 33  
 01 03 06 07 10 15 16  
 24 25 27



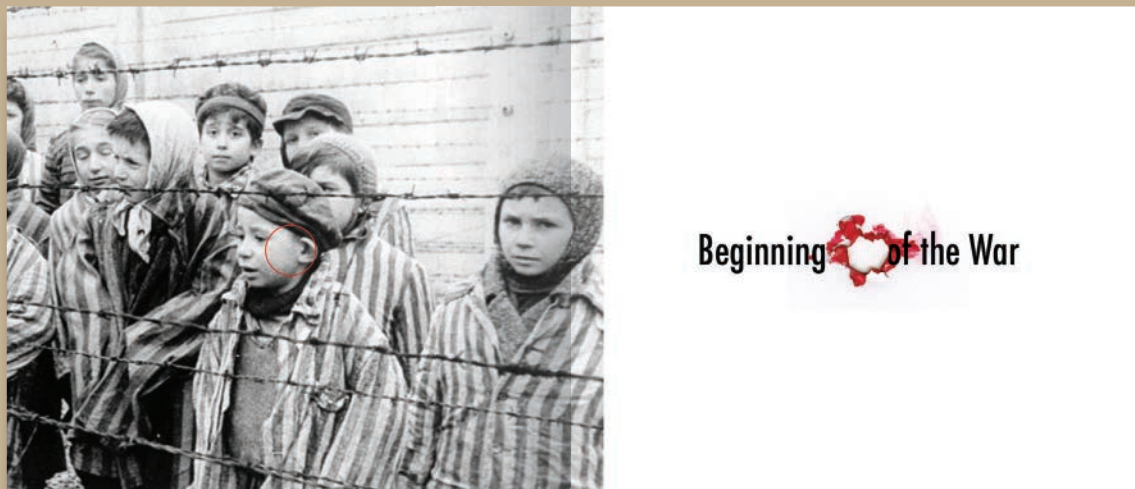
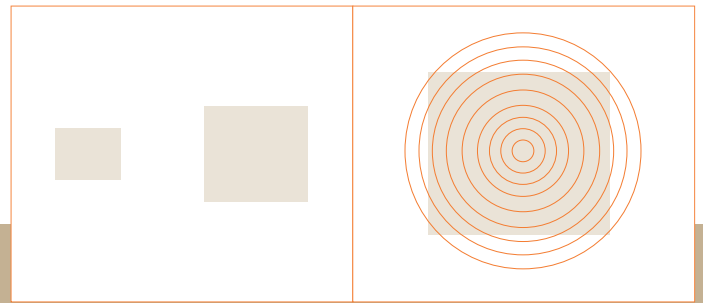
In developing a single page for a promotional calendar, the designer (also known as an educator and theoretician) saw an opportunity to reflect on his pedagogical processes in the context of a creative project. This is centered around three self-imposed considerations: How to create a verbi-visual text to express the process and theory for making; how to use form as content to create a visual “text”; and how to apply systems to collect and organize parts into a whole for relational significance.

\_\_\_ Upon being assigned the month of September, the designer considered the page size (3 x 6' [ 1 x 2 m], or double-square), and the page number (9th month), which became instrumental as the ground for meaning. The number 9 is symbolic of the academic year and the human gestation period, both related to nurturing (the body and the mind). The page format gave rise to a grid of 18 modules (two 3 x 3-module groupings) that came to represent duality and mirroring (“as above, so below”); external versus internal awareness; analytic (critical thinking) versus analogic (contemplative) perspectives; and the nature of implicate order versus indeterminacy.

\_\_\_ For content, the designer followed an assignment he'd given to his students, in which they defined the concept of hope as a series of word/image combinations, filtered through three attitudes (favorable, neutral, and critical); he took photographs of his students' design processes, selecting fragments based on momentary, isolated interest.

\_\_\_ These elements were cut apart, ripped, and otherwise collaged into the grid area, which steadily became obliterated in some areas while remaining discoverable in others—the visual expression of a rumination on the dualities pondered in the concepts that underpin the exploration.

Narrative Allusion / Deconstruction /  
Spontaneous Composition





**Hayoung Shin**  
**Timothy Samara, Instructor**  
 New York, NY | USA

**Book about the history  
 of World War II; student  
 work**

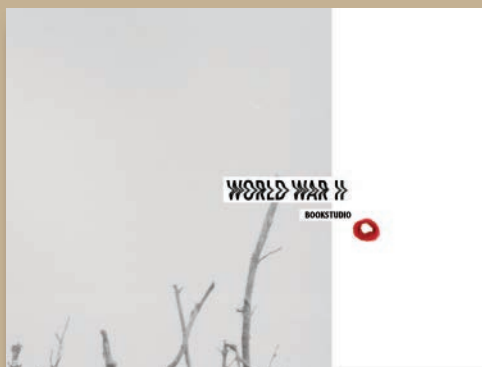
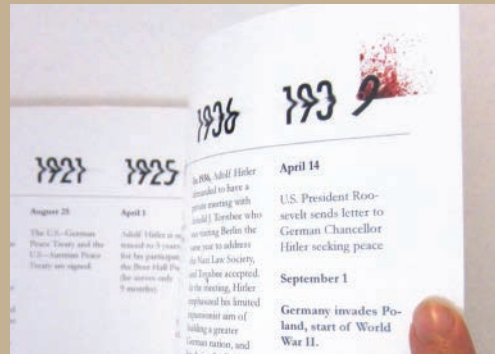
**02 08 14 15 17 24 27**  
**30 31**  
**05 19 35**

The premise for the design of this history book about World War II—in which a bullet hole explodes through the book block from beginning to end—came about through a chance operation that resulted in a line of text appearing to have been shot through (see the detail images immediately to the right). Upon seeing this effect, the designer decided to evolve the visual effect into a physical one.

\_\_\_\_ The book is divided into major chronological sections. Despite stark divisions in overall use of black or white, and changes in the complexity of the typography (it becomes more disjointed and textural when it describes military action or humanitarian atrocity), the bullet hole's constant, expected expansion creates a sense of continuity and also a kind of inevitability—outcomes of the War, if ever uncertain, are grimly reinforced.

\_\_\_\_ Some recognizable structure remains as the type moves around and responds to both content and the physical hole, but in many situations the structure is obscured by overlaps of text and interference by “shrapnel.”

\_\_\_\_ A filmic use of framing, cropping, and scaling period photographs adds a lyrical, kinetic depth to the book's pacing—as the images reduce to insets, the viewer gains “distance” to analyze; as the images expand to bleed, the viewer is immersed in the experience, sometimes at an uncomfortable level of intimacy that underscores the lasting emotional destruction that war creates, beyond the physical and economic.





## Spontaneous Composition / Image as Source

DESIGN

Büro Uebele Visuelle  
Kommunikation  
Stuttgart | Germany

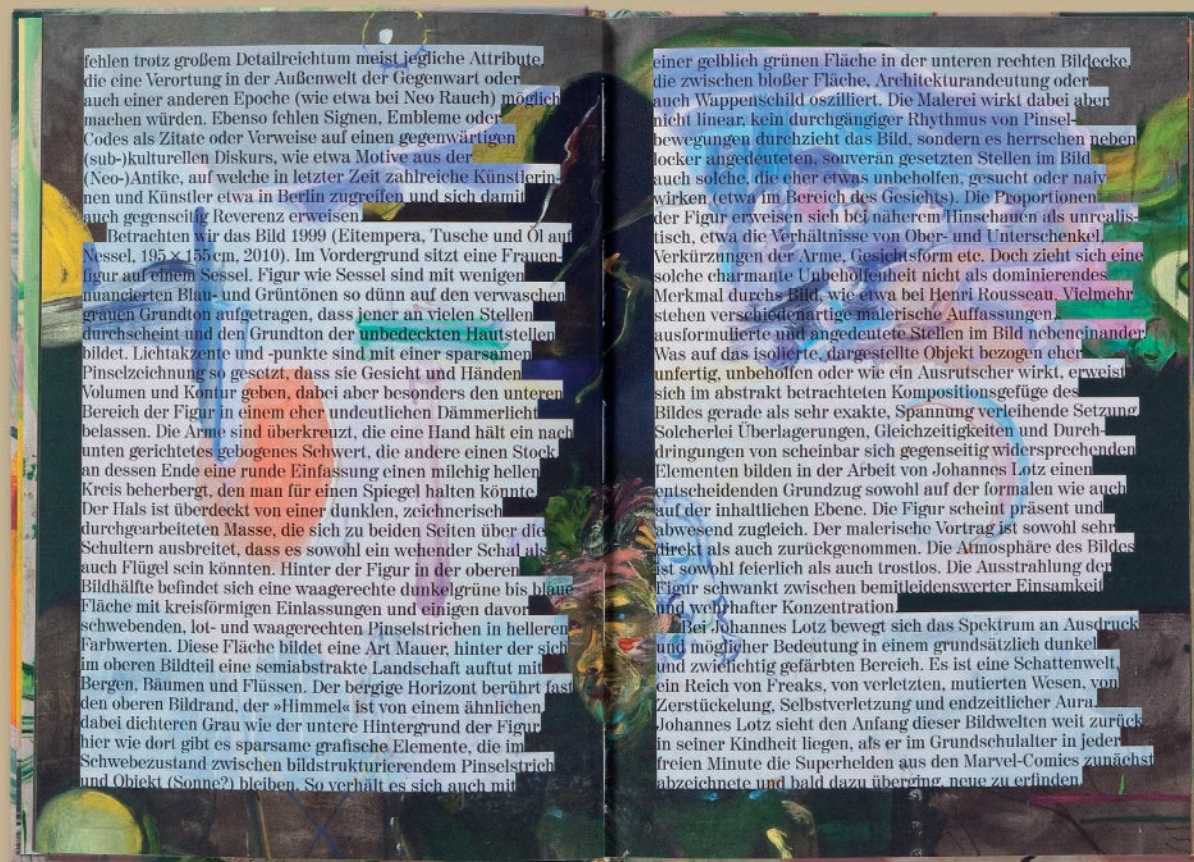
Catalogue for exhibition  
of artist Johannes Lotz

EXHIBIT COMPARISONS

01 08 09 10 22 24 31  
04 33

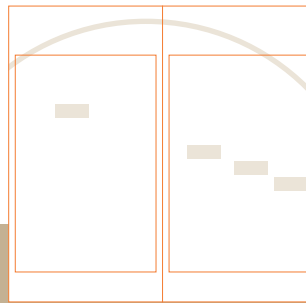


The design of this exhibition catalogue defies convention such that it's almost not a layout concept: Images of the artist's work occupy the pages full-bleed, and the text—essays and image captions—run across them. Captions are either reversed from dark areas or print as dark on light areas (a straightforward enough strategy)—but running text appears in a colored highlight effect, as though it has been selected with a cursor on screen—which alters the hue relationships of the underlying artwork to ensure the text is legible. The apparent simplicity of the execution belies the almost obsessive attention to the selection, ordering, cropping, color transitions, and color reversal logic of the images required to achieve a credible result that seems—at a glance—not really designed.





# Verbal Deconstruction / Narrative Allusion / Image as Source



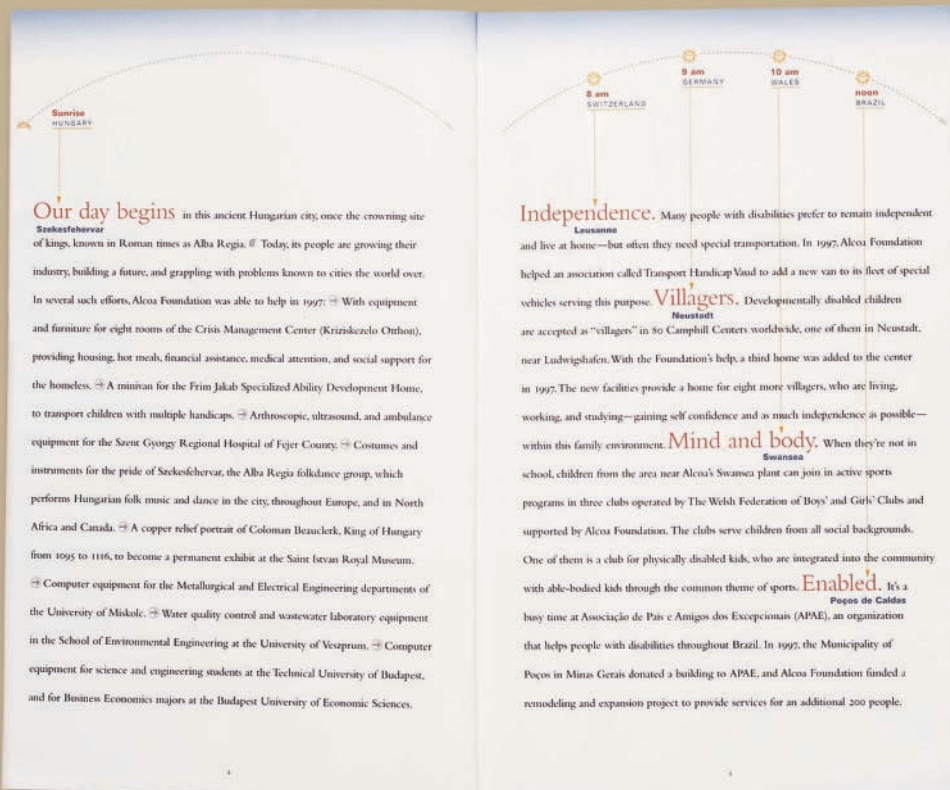
DESIGN

Landesberg Design Assocs.  
Pittsburgh, PA | USA

Annual report for Alcoa  
Foundation, a philanthropic  
organization

EXHIBIT COMPARISONS

02 11 15 20 29  
04 19

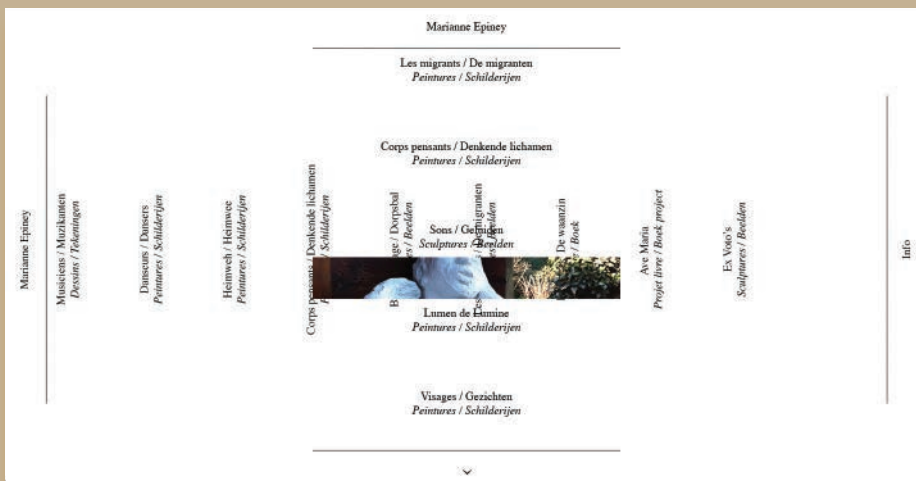
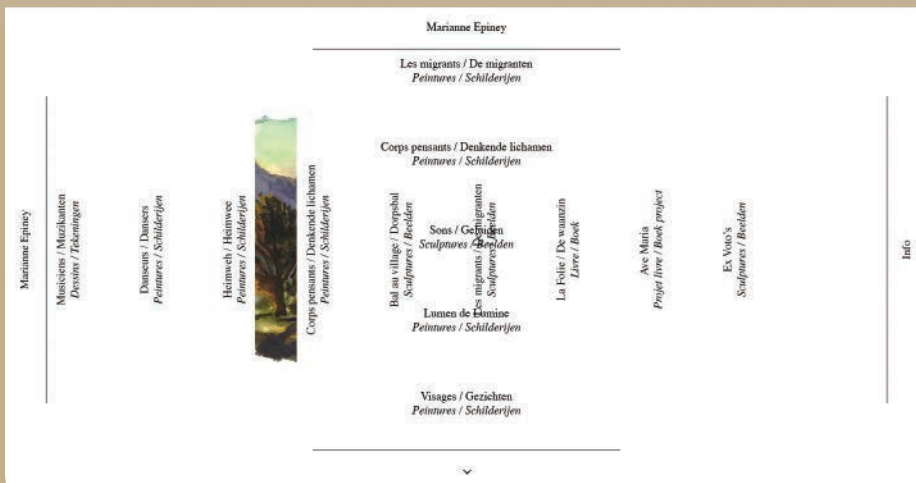
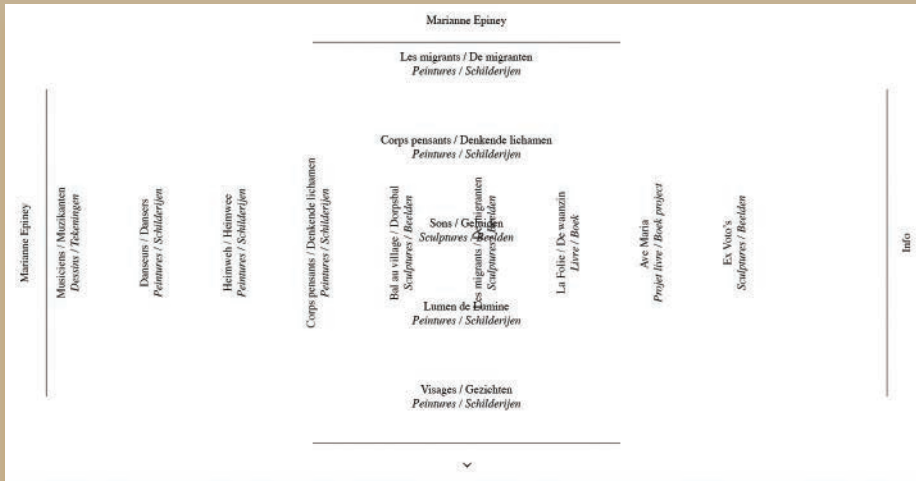
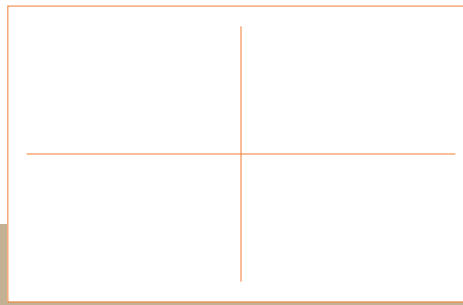


Although this elegant annual report uses a conventional column grid for its financial disclosures and management information, its front matter has almost no structure at all.

— A single hangline that orients the running text is the only alignment present; the flush-left alignment at the left margin of the pages is so close to the edge of the format that the text almost appears to flow in from outside the book. This single horizontal flowline establishes a clear headspace at the top of the page into which some illustrative material is placed, but the organization of the pages is dependent on the rhythm of the running text. Occasional callouts of key words or phrases and a diagram of the sun traveling in the sky at particular times link the text conceptually to a sense of place and time on Earth.

— The horizontal line establishes a sense of horizon, which is perhaps seen from the ocean—a design element referenced in the linear wave of text across the pages. On the image spreads that alternate with the text spreads, a simple visual relationship between the arc of the sun and a full-bleed image grounds the reader.

## Centered-Axis Structure / Vertical+Horizontal

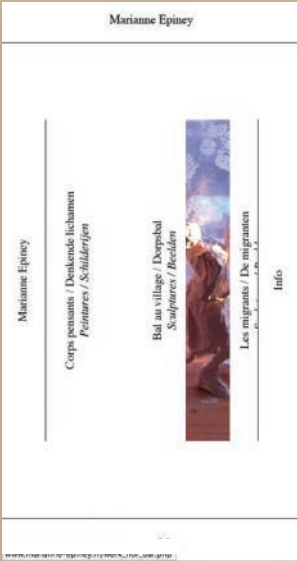
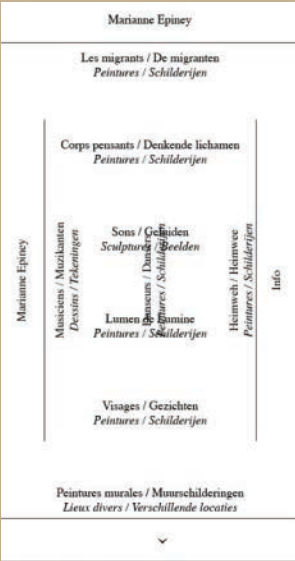
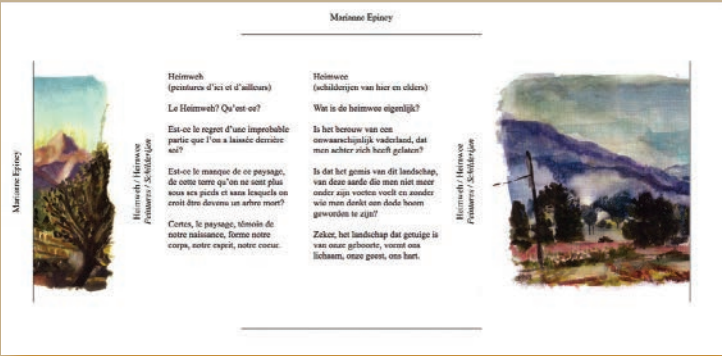
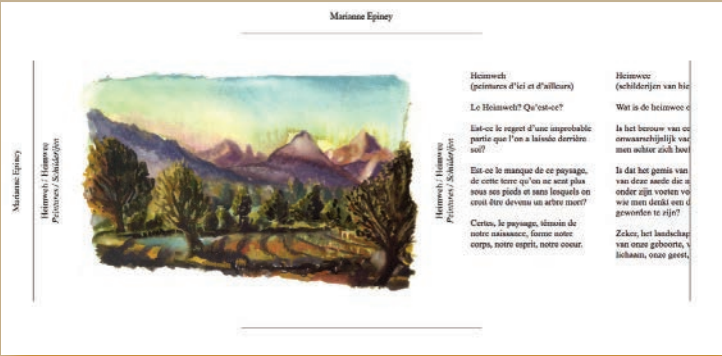


Many websites present material organized around the browser's central axis—it's a sometimes helpful way of maintaining a consistent presentation as the margin proportions to left and right change with those of the browser. This site makes dramatic, elegant use of centered-axis structure not merely as a default condition, but to achieve thoughtful detailing and viewing effects for the artist's work that it presents.

\_\_\_ The navigation exists in list form and is arranged in two groupings, one following the central vertical axis and the other following the central horizontal axis. Each list is tethered to the exterior margin; a line rule defines the margin along each edge and these remain constant—no matter how the browser changes size or shape, no matter the device being used for browsing. The information scrolls between opposing line rules (in both directions) and each text element reveals, on mouseover, an image link to an individual page for viewing a specific work or group of related works. Interesting spatial ambiguities and textural complexities occur when the text and image links cross each other in the center of the page.

\_\_\_ On pages that present individual art works, the scroll direction remains the same as that of the list (vertical or horizontal) in which the work's link was found. Inset, as well as silhouetted, images of works in a variety of media follow the same scrolling logic. Text descriptions intersperse images, generally arranged in straightforward columns whose widths are independent of proportions related to images, negative spaces, and margins.





# Verbal Deconstruction / Narrative Allusion / Pictorialization



DESIGN

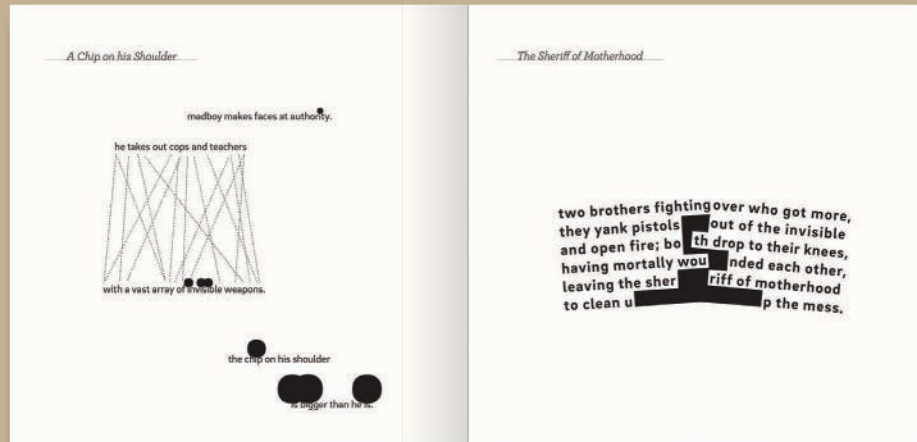
Warren Lehrer  
Sunnyside, NY | USA

Design of a book featuring  
poems by Dennis Bernstein

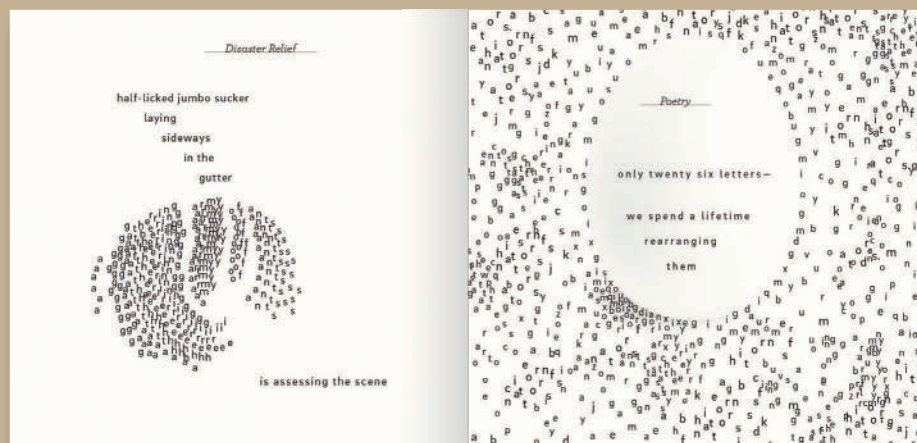
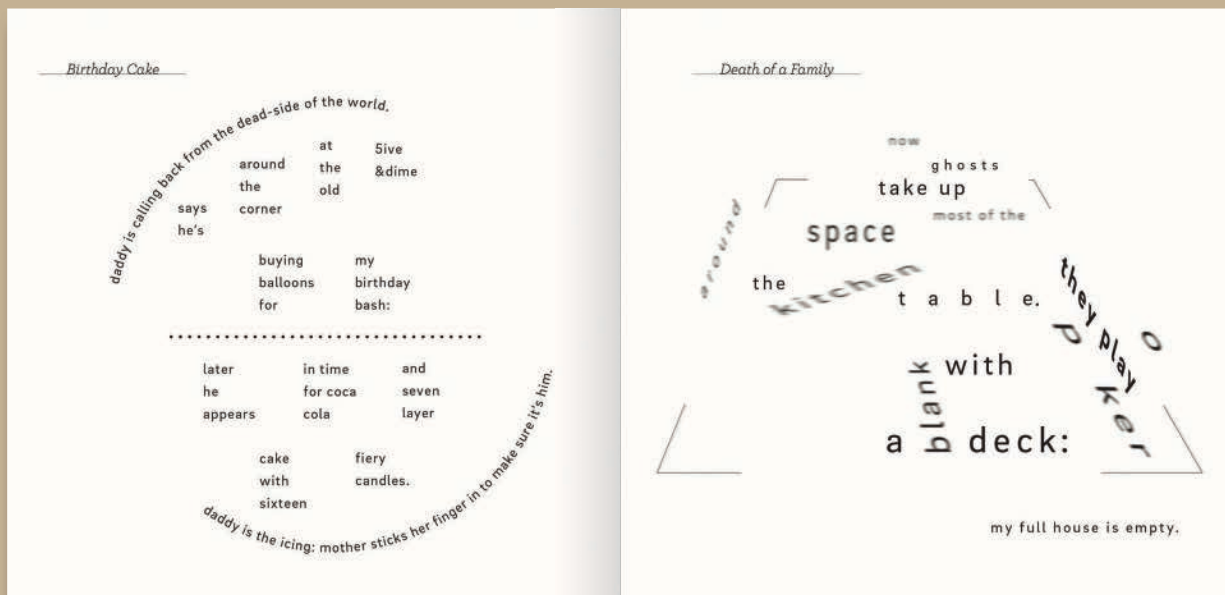
EXHIBIT COMPARISONS

01 04 08 10 11 12 15  
20 24 28

16



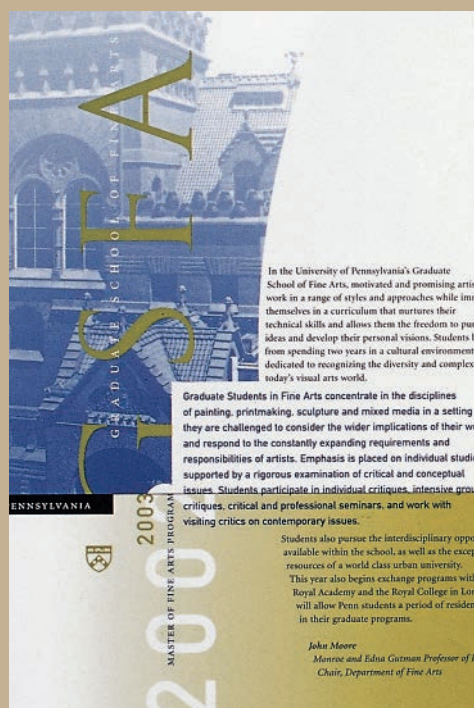
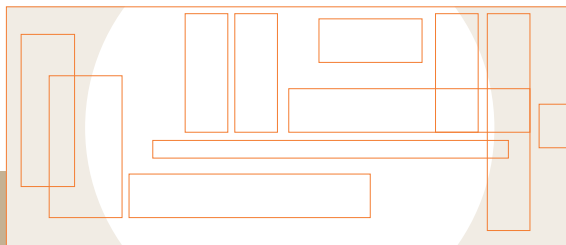
The notion of concrete poetry extends back some four hundred years—and yet it never disappoints in its delightful surrealism. This book of concrete poems exploits every formal aspect of typography, at a fevered pitch, to establish its syntactic relevance to the semantic and to ensure—uncannily—that reading order is never in question. Subtle changes in gray value, spacing, together with careful positioning of each word's or phrase's beginning and ending points, help the reader identify where to go from one element to another, and to visually separate a sequence



of elements they're already following from new ones they encounter adjacent to it, or that interfere spatially with it. The designer integrates graphical elements—dots, lines, shapes created by interstices between text—and uses punctuation as images, whenever it suits the content of the poetry. For the most part, though, letters and words do the heavy lifting all by themselves.



# Grid Deconstruction / Column / Splicing

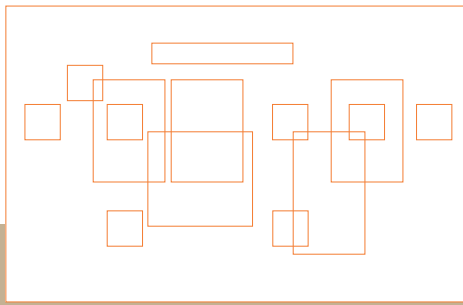


Multiple gridlike structures converge in this foldout course prospectus for a fine-arts educational program. Instances of single columns, triple columns, and modular structures appear, each suited to the nature of the paragraph it is structuring. The long, narrow, horizontal column of visiting artist names, for instance, accommodates what could have been a cumbersome listing in an unexpected way that unifies the four panels and forms a horizon line for the architectural image in the background.

\_\_\_ All of the substructures are organized relative to each other, collectively under the influence of the enormous focal circle that links front and back panels and draws the reader into the format from the outside. Each element counteracts and carefully balances the tension or thrust of elements around it. Architectonic vanishing points lock the typography to the implied landscape of buildings where the program is housed.



## Grid Deconstruction / Modular / Splicing



### DESIGN

**Poulin+Morris**  
New York, NY | USA

**Permanent exhibition for  
Vassar College Integrated  
Sciences Commons**

### EXHIBIT COMPARISONS

**05 06 07 09 14 25**  
**03 06 07 10 16 17 21**  
**24 26 30 32 33 34 35**

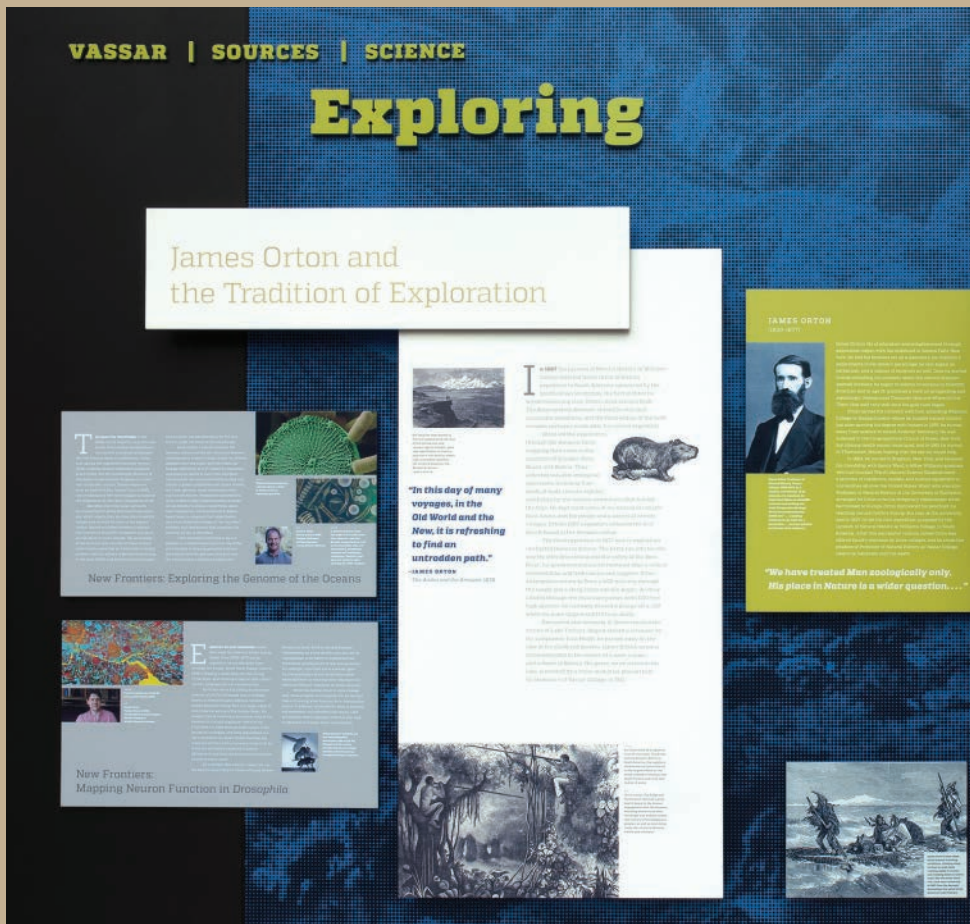


This dynamically arranged exhibition incorporates many independent elements that sit dimensionally on the surface of the wall where it is installed, including extruded titling, panels that appear to float in front of each other, and display cases embedded into the wall itself.

Most of the panels that contain information—all of different sizes, and presenting information of differing levels of complexity—are internally organized using grids. These grids tend to be panel-specific, however, some are, in fact, modular, while others are hierarchic. Of all things, the caption widths are the only consistent increment throughout. Still, the individual panels exhibit decisive alignments within...

That are extrapolated, played off of, and deviated from in terms of the panels' arrangement. They often overlap without their edges establishing any alignment whatsoever, and the positions of alignments within one panel rarely meet up with those of another. Sometimes such alignments occur between the edge of a panel and some graphical form in the panel it overlaps; or between the top of a panel and the meanline of the lowercase letters in an adjacent titling element.

The interplay of alignments and spatial proportions at this intimate level is extraordinarily complex and detailed; it counters the deft, almost effortless quality of the overall arrangement. A similar logic of counterpoint, that of structure against lack thereof, pervades the wall layout at every level—some elements adhering to grids and others freely ignoring them.





# Innovating



Margaret Floy Washburn, Vassar Class of 1881, was the first woman to earn a PhD degree in psychology. She was a pioneer in the field of psychology, and her work laid the foundation for modern psychology.

MARGARET FLOY WASHBURN  
(1871-1939, Vassar Class of 1881)



Margaret Floy Washburn, Vassar Class of 1881, was the first woman to earn a PhD degree in psychology. She was a pioneer in the field of psychology, and her work laid the foundation for modern psychology.

Margaret Floy Washburn, Vassar Class of 1881, was the first woman to earn a PhD degree in psychology. She was a pioneer in the field of psychology, and her work laid the foundation for modern psychology. She was a pioneer in the field of psychology, and her work laid the foundation for modern psychology.

"The results of experimental work bring more satisfaction than the development of theories."

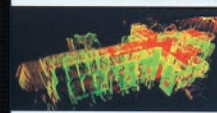


## Models of the Transitory and Invisible



In medieval times, physical models or diagrams were essential learning tools for medical students. In essence, in three dimensions, the human body was a mystery. The techniques to fabricate these models developed over centuries and changing realities of their medical resources and worth working out in museums worldwide. Models for the classroom rapidly gained mainstream popularity in the 19th century when science began to mature from studying entire organisms in favor of exploring processes and functions. In the same way that Vassar faculty took students on field trips to view events or nature landscapes, they used models, then and now, to bring into the classroom in a relative way. The designers of these models were artists of the highest order, using skill and many different materials to construct accurate, elegant, three-dimensional models for the classroom.

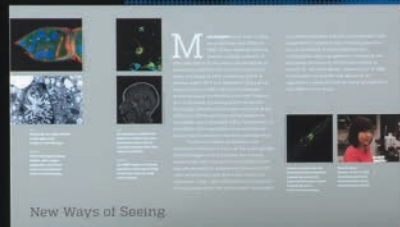
Today's cutting-edge models are more likely to utilize electronics and programming to display time processes, abstract ideas, or behaviors. Modeling the form and actual experience of being in a Gothic cathedral, 360-degrees of high-resolution images brings the cathedral to the classroom for art Professor Andrew Tolan. Curveying evolutionary concepts and mathematical relationships of gender adherence to physical form, the Visual Interdisciplinary Behavior Laboratory uses 3D printing and computer-aided design to explore the evolution of physical traits and behaviors, such as eyeheight, locomotion, and predation and defense.



# Observing

## Universe

Every surface in the laboratory of the 19th century was covered with glass and mirrors, and at all times was open, almost constantly open, to the light. The light was the only source of illumination, and the light was the only source of illumination.



New Ways of Seeing



# Directory of Contributors

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**Timothy Samara** is a New York-based graphic designer and educator whose twenty-five-year career has focused on visual identity and branding, communication design, and typography for large corporations, nonprofit organizations, and start-up entrepreneurs.

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Assembling material for a book of this kind depends on the good will of so many busy people—as much this time around as for the first edition. My sincere thanks to all of the designers who collected examples of their work for consideration, for their suggestions, and for their great encouragement.

\_\_\_ I am grateful to Massimo Vignelli, who very graciously gave me four hours out of a busy day back in 2001 to meet with me and speak in-depth about this book's subject.

I was deeply saddened by Massimo's passing in 2014 and, just recently, by that of his wife, Lella. Even before I became a designer, their vision was a great source of inspiration.

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