The TYPE PROJECT BOOK

TYPOGRAPHIC PROJECTS TO SHARPEN YOUR CREATIVE SKILLS & DIVERSIFY YOUR PORTFOLIO

NIGEL FRENCH & HUGH D'ANDRADE

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Introduction

How do graphic designers think about their work? Where do their ideas come from? What kind of tricks and tools do they use, what typefaces do they choose—and what are the reasons for those choices? There are many books about design, but few written *by* designers, *for* designers, exploring their process, and breaking the work down step by step. Fewer still put typography front and center of this decision making and practice.

We believe that typography is the foundation of any good design. If the typography is poor, no matter how strong the other elements, the design fails. And we're not just talking about typos. Too many potentially strong designs are spoiled by careless typography that looks like it was added as an afterthought, with little respect for the words, the people who wrote them, or the rich history of the letters themselves.

For these reasons, we set out to write a book about design thinking with typography at its core. We address a wide range of typical graphic design jobs, some glamorous, others pedestrian—because when you're a jobbing designer, you don't get to choose.

To introduce ourselves: Nigel is a freelance designer and photographer based in the UK. He's recorded many design-related courses for the popular online training library Lynda.com, now LinkedIn Learning. Hugh is an award-winning illustrator and Creative Director for the Electronic Frontier Foundation, a San Francisco–based non-profit devoted to defending civil liberties in the digital world.

What's Inside this Book

In *The Type Project Book*, we walk you through graphic design projects that we found particularly useful—the kind of projects that are challenging *and* fun. We explore everything from poster design to magazine layouts, from animated web banners to hand-drawn type. With each project, we share our thinking process, the ideas that inspired us, and break down key phases, while leaving you enough room to experiment and make the project your own.

Some of these projects we have dusted off from our portfolios, others were created specifically for this book. We explore a range of techniques, some of them known to any seasoned designer, some of them our own special concoctions. The projects give a comprehensive account of what's possible using typography in Adobe InDesign, Illustrator, and Photoshop. But at the same time, the projects are personal, and somewhat idiosyncratic. We feel it couldn't be otherwise—our muses would not allow it!

Our intended audience

We have imagined our reader to be a colleague or advanced student, someone comfortable with the software basics, familiar with design fundamentals—perhaps someone looking for inspiration, techniques, and workarounds to

sharpen their practice. While this isn't intended as a beginner book, we think that an enterprising novice will enjoy it, with some supplementary materials — online or in print — that explain the basics of the applications we're using.

We do this stuff every day and have been doing it for years. Decades in fact. But we're acutely aware that there's always more to learn. We're not infallible; we have our blind spots and bad habits. Sometimes we've become aware while writing the descriptions that there are other ways (aren't there always?) of achieving the same or similar results, and in some cases those ways may have been preferable. But these are the techniques that got us through. At the end of the day, the work got done.

We hope that when you, dear reader, realize that we, the "experts," are also just muddling through, it will help to demystify the learning of design techniques and software skills. Design thinking is subjective, and sometimes the best results come from doing things "the wrong way," as our exploration of historical design styles will show. There are no officially sanctioned methods, and even if there were, as anarchists by temperament, we would reject them. And we'd suggest you do the same.

That said, we know that design conventions and traditions exist for a reason, and we respect them. We have studied and continue to study our craft. We hope that with experience comes wisdom, that through practice our muscle memory is deep, and that our methodology prevents us from repeating the same mistakes. But on some level, we know what works, only because we've tried so many things that don't.

If you're looking for ideas for self-initiated projects to elevate your design skills, we think this book will help you. The projects will give you suggestions for how to tackle similar design problems. Our solution is just one from an infinite range of possibilities. We hope that, rather than follow along to the letter, you'll pick the bits that interest you. Create your own projects inspired by ours, take our techniques, adapt them, and mix them with your own for a unique solution.

Some technical notes

The careful reader will notice that our pronoun shifts throughout. Most often we use *we*, both because it felt friendlier and because we collaborated on several of these projects. Some sections were authored by only one of us and were personal projects; these seemed to work better in the first person. We'll always try to clue you in on which author is talking.

For each project you'll find links to a Pinterest page with inspirational examples. These extend the range of what we can show in a single book, and they also, in many cases, served as *our* inspiration for the projects. We hope you'll explore these and dig deeper into the material. We've also used callout boxes for the typeface that has the lead role in each project.

We are Mac users, but neither of us is a devotee of the Cult of Steve, and we like to think that such affiliations don't matter. A Windows user will have no trouble. Towards that end, our convention for listing keyboard shortcuts is Mac then Windows. For example: Create a Clipping mask (Cmd+Option+G/Ctrl+Alt+G).

Above all else, this book is a dialogue — between ourselves and with you — about good design, type, and combining both. We want to hear what you think, so don't be shy about contacting us.

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> ## "Typefaces will carry stories best when they have stories of their own."
>
> — Tobias Frere-Jones

Pastiche

As it turns out, there's nothing new under the sun. Every brilliant design owes a debt to the designs that came before — and that's especially true for typography, where the traditions stretch back centuries. Designers have always learned by imitating and mimicking the voices of the past — sometimes in homage, sometimes in mockery, sometimes just for the challenge. In this chapter we use modern techniques to explore famous design styles, and we also get to explore some fascinating graphic design history.

2

Victorian

10
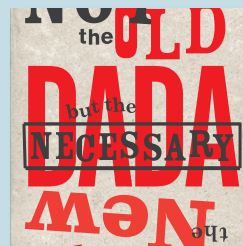
Dada

6

Art Nouveau

14

Constructivist

18

Bauhaus

30
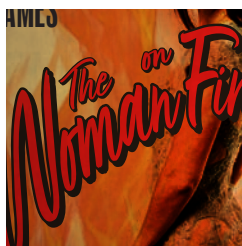
Pulp

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Psychedelia

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Art Deco

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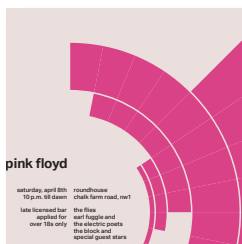
Swiss

46

Punk

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Wartime Poster

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Country Music Poster

50

Grunge

Victorian
Embrace decorative excess

In our era of minimalist design, a common piece of typographic advice is keep it simple. We're often told in design school to limit ourselves to two or three typefaces at most, and to leave plenty of white space. "Let it breathe." Victorian printers would beg to differ.

Let's start with a definition. Literally, the Victorian era is defined by the reign of Queen Victoria of Britain, 1837 to 1901. More broadly it's come to mean a cultural period in the late 1800s, from about the 1860s to the turn of the century.

One of the characteristics of Victorian typography is its, um, lack of restraint. The advertising placards, posters, and packaging of that era were created by craftsman printers, as the category of "designer" had yet to be invented, and they put to use all the ornamentation and excess they could muster. In a time when mass production and advertising were relatively new concepts, advertising needed to stand out. Bigger, louder, brighter, more detailed designs were the order of the day!

Choose the type

For this project, we wanted typefaces that were designed during the era or typefaces that consciously evoke the Victorian age.

In Illustrator we added the main type (centered, optical kerning), applied a Flag warp, and moved the baselines of the initial cap down.
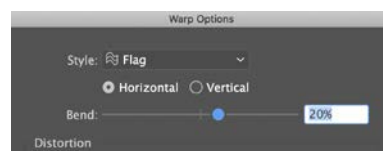
The type after warping, optical kerning, and a negative baseline shift applied to the initial caps.

Victorian Swash

Christina Torre,
Richard Kegler. P22.

abcdefghijklmnopqrstu
vwxyz ABCDEFGHI
JKLMNOPQRSTU
VWXYZ1234567890

Create the frame

Typographic ornaments are a great way to extend your palette. To create the frame, for example, we used an ornament font that is part of the Balford family. Use the Glyphs panel to identify the ornaments you want, insert them, and then convert them to outlines so that you can scale them more easily. To get the arrangement you're after, there will be a lot of rotating, reflecting, and scaling. When you arrive at a pleasing frame (ours is comprised of three elements), use Pathfinder > Merge to combine all into a single frame. To avoid moving the frame in error, put it on its own layer and lock the layer.
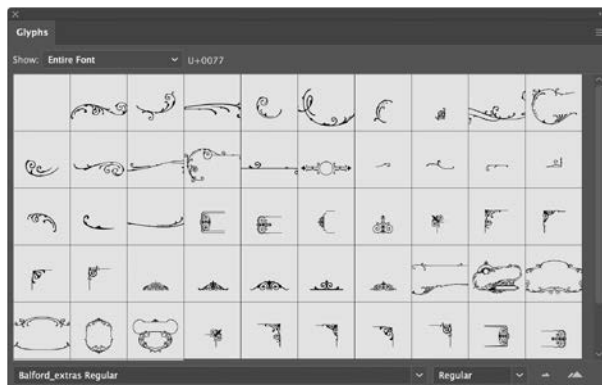
Use the Glyphs panel to explore the Balford extras ornaments font.

Decoration

Apply an offset shadow and woodcut shading through the Appearance panel. This keeps the text editable, but more practically, it makes it easier to manage small adjustments to the exact amount of offsets applied. A potential downside, especially when it comes to applying multiple pattern fills for the shading, is that using the Appearance panel in this way can be processor intensive. To maximize editing flexibility, also make sure to convert your swatches to global colors. Check out the diagram on the next page for a breakdown of how to apply effects through the Appearance panel.

Appearance

Type

Warp: Flag

Stroke:

Fill:

Set the color of the topmost fill (A).

Opacity: Default

Fill:

Transform

Make the second fill the same color as the background. Offset with a Transform effect (B).

Opacity: Default

Fill:

Transform

The third fill is offset further with a Transform effect (C).

Opacity: Default

Fill:

The fourth fill applies a pattern (6 lpi 20%) (D).

Transform

The first transformation of the pattern offsets multiple copies (E).

Transform

Add

The second transformation of the pattern changes its scale and rotation. Note, Transform Objects is deselected. (F).

Opacity: Default

Characters

Choose Pathfinder > Add from the fx menu to combine the multiple offset shapes and patterns into one.

Opacity: Default

A

B

Move
Horizontal: —— 3 pt
Vertical: —— 2 pt

C

Move
Horizontal: —— 6 pt
Vertical: —— 4 pt

D

Patterns ▶ Basic Graphics ▶ Basic Graphics_Dots
Scientific ▶ Decorative ▶ Basic Graphics_Lines

E

Move
Horizontal: —— 0.25 pt
Vertical: —— 0.25 pt

Rotate
Angle: 0°

Options
☑ Transform Objects   ☐ Reflect X
☑ Transform Patterns   ☐ Reflect Y
☐ Scale Strokes & Effects ☐ Random

Copies 72

F

Scale
Horizontal: —— 18%
Vertical: —— 18%

F

Rotate
Angle: −30°

Options
☐ Transform Objects   ☐ Reflect X
☑ Transform Patterns   ☐ Reflect Y
☐ Scale Strokes & Effects ☐ Random

Copies 0

There are limits to what you can do while retaining the type as editable text. So having made a copy to the pasteboard of progress so far, we chose Object > Expand Appearance and drilled down through Isolation Mode by double-clicking to the *M* and the *E* to flip the color of the fill and offset stroke for the initial letters.

Adding catchwords

Catchwords are small words, typically prepositions or articles, or possibly short phrases that are designed as and can be input as a single glyph. Typically, they evoke vintage advertising or typographic posters of the late 19th century. Some fonts that have catchwords are HWT Catchwords, Adorn Catchwords, Charcuterie Catchwords, and Adobe Wood Type Ornaments. You can explore what's available using the Glyphs panel and insert the catchword simply by double-clicking at the point of your cursor. We hoped to find a catchword for *The One And Only*, but in the end had to make our own, combining type with two catchwords from the Balford font.

A texture layer serves as a basis for the layer mask applied to the layer below. Its visibility is turned off, but the layer is retained in case we change our minds.

The layer is a Linked Smart Object: If changes are required to the composition, double-click the layer thumbnail to open the Smart Object in Illustrator.
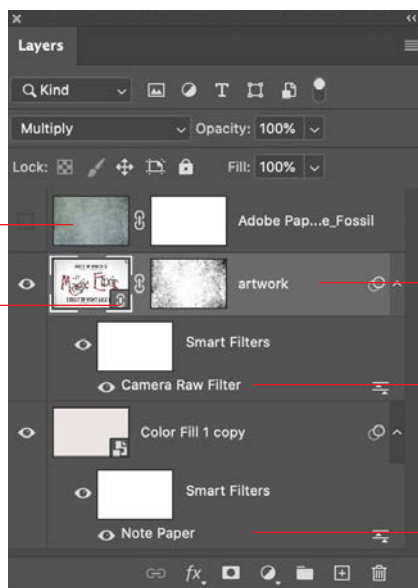
The layer mask, derived from the gray values of the layer above, embeds the texture into the artwork.

In the Camera Raw filter, grain is added (**A**) for desired fuzziness around letter edges and to shading (**B**).

The Note Paper filter applied to a Color Fill layer provides a paper-like texture for the artwork to blend with.

Exploring stylistic alternates

As if we didn't already have enough flourishes, we decided to add in a few more by using some contextual alternates from the Balford font. When you select a glyph, a blue line will appear beneath it along with a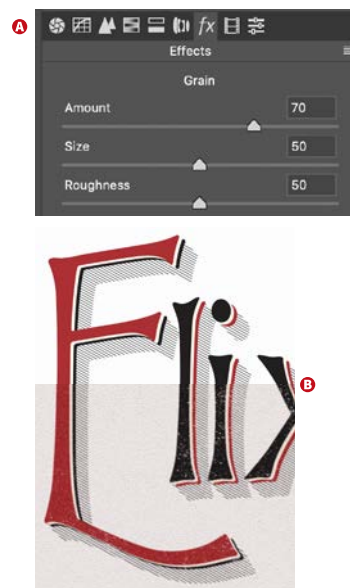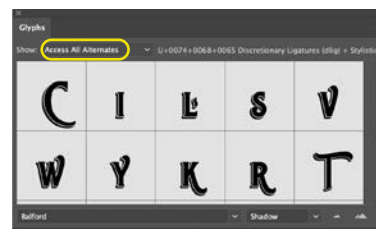 row of alternate glyphs (if any exist in the font). You can also use the Glyphs panel: For Show, choose Access All Alternates to explore what's available. We ended up using the *R* and the *T*.

Texture

To finish the project, we roughened up the woodcut shading and added some texture: tasks that we find much easier in Photoshop. We created a new canvas at the same size as the Illustrator artboard and placed the artwork in progress as a Linked Smart Object (File > Place Linked).

As a base, we added a Color Fill layer in an ivory color and converted this to a Smart Object. For some texture, we added a Note Paper filter from the Sketch group of filters. This filter uses your foreground and background color, so before we applied it, we set these to white and off-white, respectively. We changed the blending mode of the artwork layer to Multiply to combine it with this texture.

Next, we used the Camera Raw filter to add some grain. This does two things: makes the edges of the letters slightly fuzzy, like ink spreading on paper, and makes the shading less perfect and more realistic looking.

Finally, for some aging, we added a layer of texture. We had initially intended to blend this down through the layers, but ultimately decided that we liked it better used as a layer mask on the artwork layer. To do this, with just the texture layer visible, go to the Channels panel and Cmd/Ctrl-click the RGB channel. This will activate a selection of the gray values of the layer. Now move to the artwork layer, and click Add Layer Mask. To adjust the contrast and see more of the image and less of the texture, press Cmd/Ctrl+L to bring up Levels and move the white point slider to the left. Note that because we're working directly on the layer mask, a non-destructive adjustment layer is not an option.

Art Nouveau
Tangled up in vines

There are a few people in the world who hate Art Nouveau. The same people also hate flowers and puppies. Everyone else loves this beautiful style that flourished (literally) between 1890 and 1910. Its characteristics varied from country to country, but all of its varieties shared a use of curved lines and natural forms, particularly flowers and plants, presented in a clean, stylized fashion. While the style embraces the natural world, it is paradoxically the result of new industrial mass production techniques.

This project starts with the slogan "For Every Time Its Art, For Art Its Freedom," a translation from the German of the inscription above the entrance of the Secession Building in Vienna. (The Vienna Secession was a group of radical Austrian artists, including Gustav Klimt, Koloman Moser, and Joseph Hoffman who, in 1897, broke away from the artistic mainstream. Think of them as the punks of their time.)

Setting the type

Start by centering the type on the artboard. Reduce the leading (we changed the Auto Leading value from 120 to 100%), and insert line breaks to break the phrase sympathetically. We typically find that Optical automatic kerning is tighter than Metrics, making it preferable for display type, and that was the case here. Because we wanted to add strokes around the letters, we increased the tracking to give ourselves some growing room. We reduced the word spacing in the Justification settings on the Paragraph panel to 50% for Minimum, Desired, and Maximum. We added optical margin alignment (Type > Story), which factors in the punctuation at the ends of the lines. Finally for this step, we changed the *ER* letter combination to a ligature, through the Glyphs panel.

The standard ligatures that are part of the Vienna Workshop font
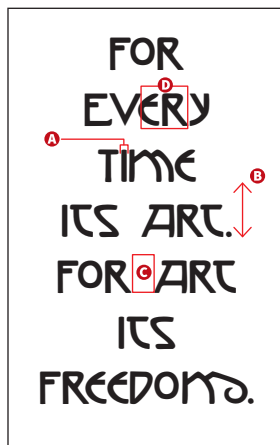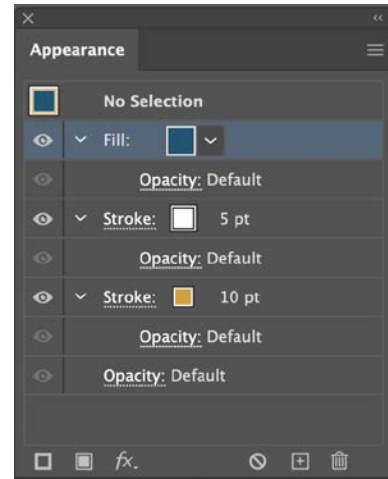

Finessing the type: The automatic kerning method is set to Optical (**Ⓐ**), the leading is reduced (**Ⓑ**), the word spacing reduced (**Ⓒ**), and a ligature applied (**Ⓓ**).

FOR EVERY TIME ITS ART. FOR ART ITS FREEDOM.

VIENNA SECESSION

Adding multiple strokes to the type

The best way to add multiple strokes is through the Appearance panel. Start by adding a new fill for the dark blue. Then, add a stroke, make it gold, increase its weight, and move it beneath the fill. Add another stroke and make its weight half that of the previous stroke.

VIENNA
WORSHOP

David Kerkhoff.
Hanoded. 2012.

ABCDEFGHIJKLM
NOPQRSTUVWXY
ZABCDEFGHIJKL
MNOPQRSTUVW
XYZ1234567890

Using the Appearance panel, a color fill sits above two strokes. The bottom (gold) stroke is heavier than the stroke above, creating the offset stroke effect.

Add the frame

The frame is constructed using the same method as the previous project: A single piece of vector art (in this case part of the P22 Art Nouveau extras font, converted to outlines) is copied, reflected, and joined together by extending the end points into a single frame. It was made into a single item using Pathfinder>Add and then converted to a Live Paint Group and colored.

The vector artwork, is duplicated and reflected to create the four corners of the frame.

The end points are extended to create the frame edges, at which point the separate pieces can be combined into one using Unite on the Pathfinder panel.
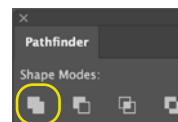
Use the Live Paint Bucket to convert the artwork to a Live Paint Group, at which point the segments can be colored.
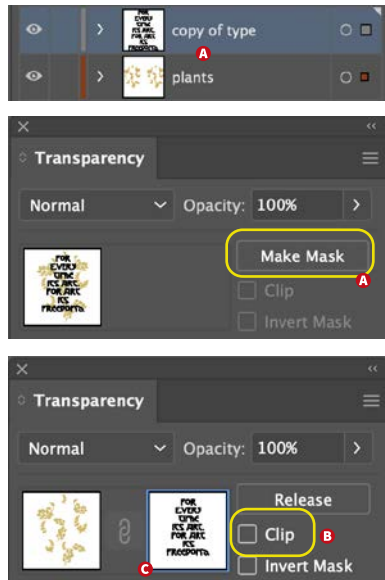
Add the vines

The vector artwork for the vines comes from the P22 Art Nouveau extras font. We converted this to outlines and then scaled, flipped, and rotated as necessary to combine the vines with the type. Alternatively, you could use Illustrator's Vine brush, which is in the Decorative>Elegant Curl & Floral Brush Set. Once the vines are in place, the challenge is how to make it appear that they are entwined with—and growing from—the type. This requires the use of an opacity mask, probably one of Illustrator's most confusing features.

The sunflowers are suggested by the decorations on the Karlsplatz metro station in Vienna.

The opacity mask will be made from the type. Make a copy of the type on a new layer above the vines layer. Expand the type (Object > Expand Appearance), and change its fill and stroke to black. Now select this type and the vines, and, on the Transparency panel, choose Make Mask. The mask starts out black; deselect Clip so that the vines are masked by the type shape.

The shape of the type will now mask the vines where they were formerly overlapping the letters. To create the entwined effect, target the opacity mask (a blue frame will appear around its thumbnail), choose the Blob brush, and paint in white to restore the opacity.

To make the opacity mask: Select the copy of the type and the plants layer below, and then choose Make Mask on the Transparency panel (**A**). Deselect Clip (**B**). Target the opacity mask (**C**), and paint with the Blob brush in white to reveal portions of the vine. (**D**).

The paper texture is a stock image, placed on its own layer at the top of the layer stack, with its blending mode set to Multiply at an opacity of 80%.

The Secession Building (1898) in Vienna, Austria