

Gunnlaugur SE

BRIEM

at the TYPE

ARCHIVE

LONDON

Exhibition of
lettering prints

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Gunnlaugur SE Briem at the Type Archive London:
Exhibition of lettering prints

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Lettering occupies a secure place among the decorative arts. It stands alongside other worthy callings: weaving, stained glass, ingenious pottery perhaps.

It brightens our lives on soap wrappers and bisquit boxes; its decorative value is beyond dispute. But can it be judged on its own merits?

Fine art generally has no function other than to be seen. Sometimes this can apply to matters alphabetical. But demands for an upgrade in the cultural ranks have so far neither excited informed opinion nor popular imagination. Still, letters delight as one minority pursuit among many: an interest in Chinese bronzes, Easter Island statuary, Dead Sea scrolls.

Ingredients

This collection brings together the features of three tasks: calligraphy, lettering and printmaking.

Calligraphy strives for impromptu writing of the artistic kind. Very little retouching is allowed. Guidelines are usually erased upon completion. In some languages the word simply means penmanship. Many examples,

historical and modern, are handsome. Some are very beautiful. Numerous practitioners claim it reduces stress and anxiety. It has been used to treat autism, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, and Alzheimer's disease.

Lettering is calligraphy with cheating. Everything is subject to cutting and patching, erasure, second thoughts. Only the end result matters. Before picking up a chisel and mallet, sensible stonecarvers work out every detail of their inscriptions. And spending an extra day making a week's work look as if it had been knocked up in twenty minutes is often time very well spent.

Printmaking creates its images with a machine, a mechanical pen substitute that can weigh half a ton. Tools and processes that lead to ink on paper, such as an engraver's burin, the etching needle, gouges for wood-carving, have their own possibilities and limitations. There are many choices.

Novelties were added to traditional methods in the late eighteenth century. Silk screen printing, first used in China during the Song dynasty, reached Europe. Senefelder's lithography came along in 1796. And in 1867 Lord Kelvin patented the inkjet. Output from such a device is also known as *giclée* printing (from French: squirt). Never mind; the art world is full of harmless conceits. It was used for this collection, with extensive use of editing software in the prepress stage.

No content

Words for display texts must be chosen with care: they tend to get in the way. The prints that follow manage without any message whatever. In addition to an alphabet they use a famous nonsense filler for longer text samples.

'Lorem ipsum ...' is commonly employed to show letterforms and composition without the distraction of content. It is a scrambled version of sections 1.10.32–3 in Cicero's *De finibus bonorum*.

Playing with letters is a joy. Every style has a mood of its own, its own tone of voice. The work is held together by traditions that go back centuries, and is pulled apart by conflicting rules of scribal practice and typographic convention. One of them tends to uniformity: moderation, standard solutions and fine points of spacing. The other aims at stretching exit strokes well beyond common sense.

There are no answers. And new temptations come along every day.

Classical capitals and free cursive italic lower case
Water-based black pigment and colour dye inks on paper
Reproduced here in 25% of original size,
A3 (29.7 × 42 cm) or 11 × 17"

ABCDÐEFGH
abcdi̇efghijklm
IJKLNO PQ
nopqrstuvwx yz þ
RSTUVWXYZ þ

Bold brush italic minuscules
Water-based black pigment and colour dye inks on paper
Reproduced here in 25% of original size,
A3 (29.7 × 42 cm) or 11 × 17"



Bold brush italic capitals

Water-based black pigment and colour dye inks on paper

Reproduced here in 25% of original size,

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Bold brush minuscules

Water-based black pigment and colour dye inks on paper

Reproduced here in 25% of original size,

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Bold brush capitals

Water-based black pigment and colour dye inks on paper

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Viking period futhark, 16-letter alphabet
Water-based black pigment and colour dye inks on paper
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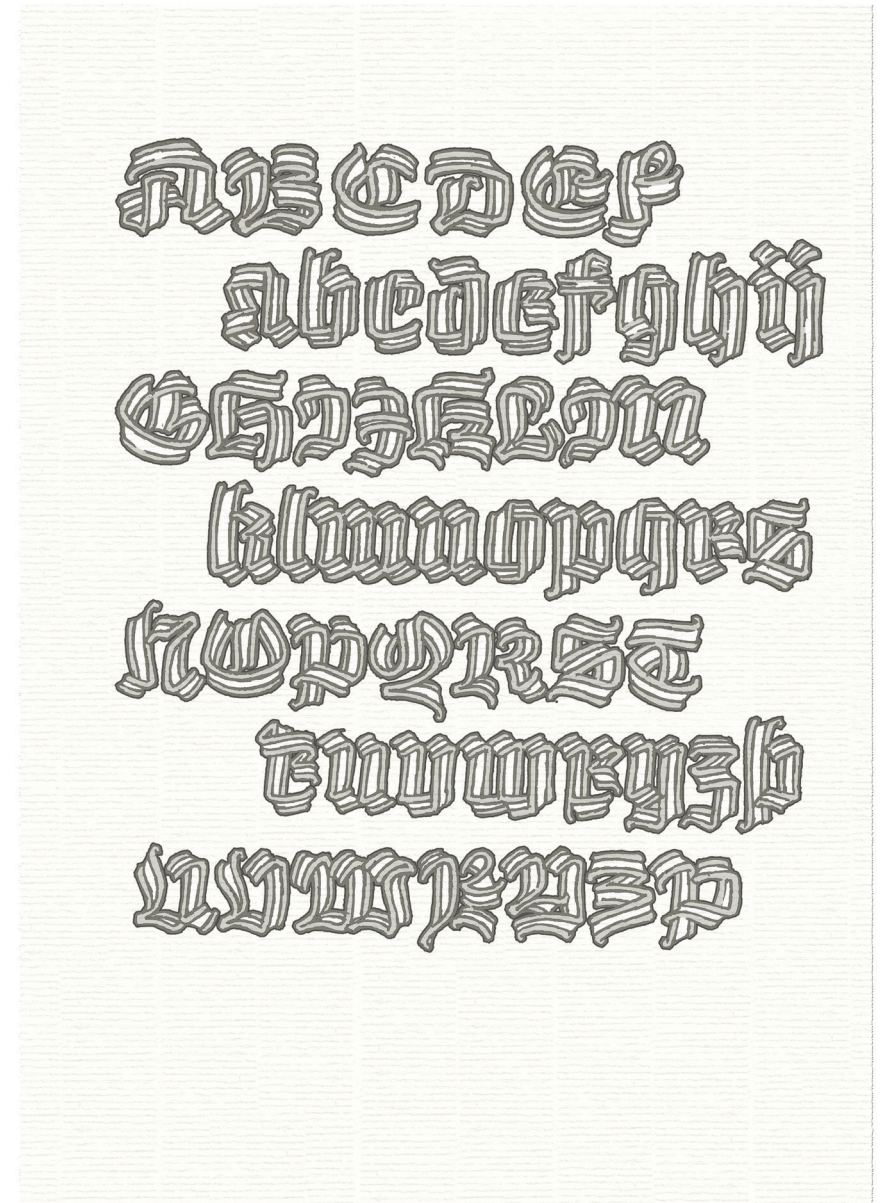


Ribbon blackletter

Water-based black pigment and colour dye inks on paper

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A3 (29.7 × 42 cm) or 11 × 17"



Icelandic höfðaletur with interlace
Water-based black pigment and colour dye inks on paper
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Höfðaletur woodcut

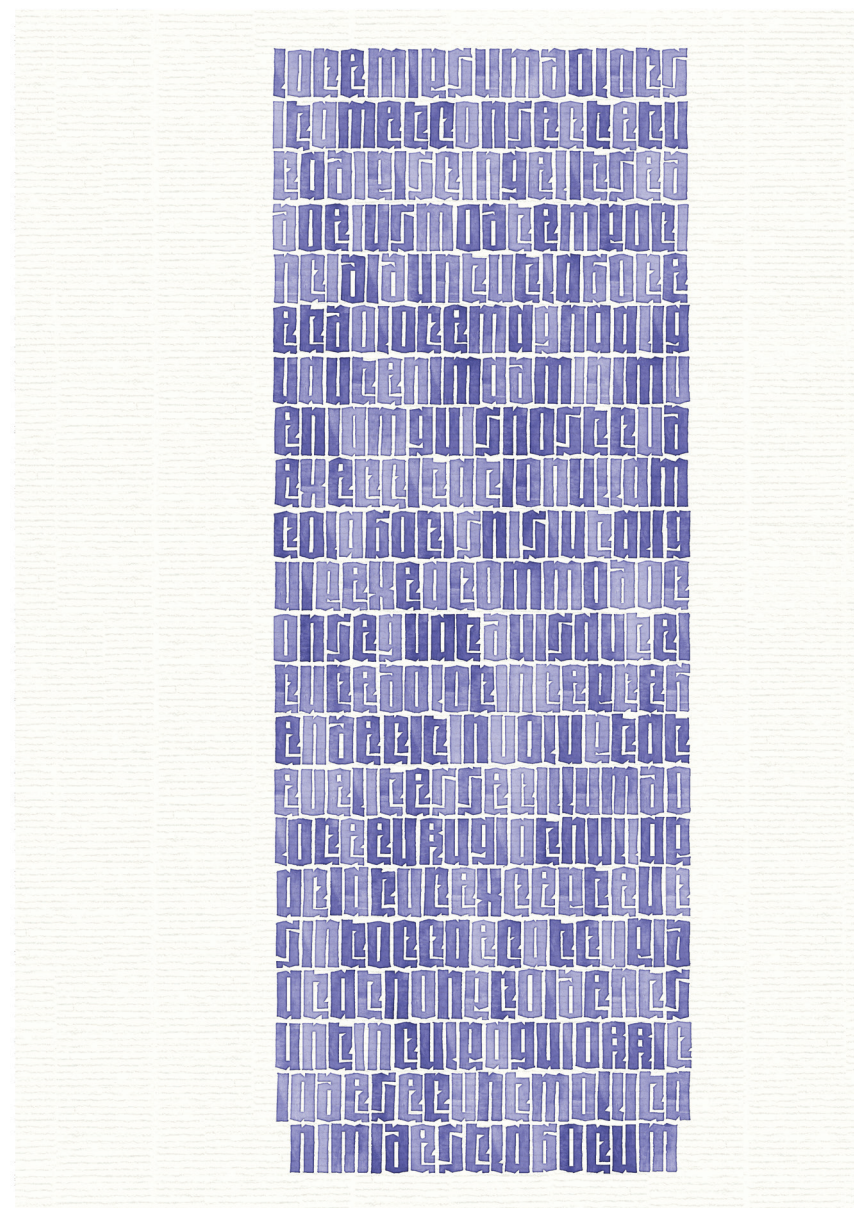
Water-based black pigment and colour dye inks on paper

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Höfðaletur composition in blue
Water-based black pigment and colour dye inks on paper
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A3 (29.7 × 42 cm) or 11 × 17"



Twelve sections, woodcut
Water-based black pigment and colour dye inks on paper
Reproduced here in 25% of original size,
A3 (29.7 × 42 cm) or 11 × 17"



Sixteen sections, woodcut
Water-based black pigment and colour dye inks on paper
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A3 (29.7 × 42 cm) or 11 × 17"



Classical capitals

Water-based black pigment and colour dye inks on paper

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Capitals composition 2

Water-based black pigment and colour dye inks on paper

Reproduced here in 25% of original size,

A3 (29.7 × 42 cm) or 11 × 17"

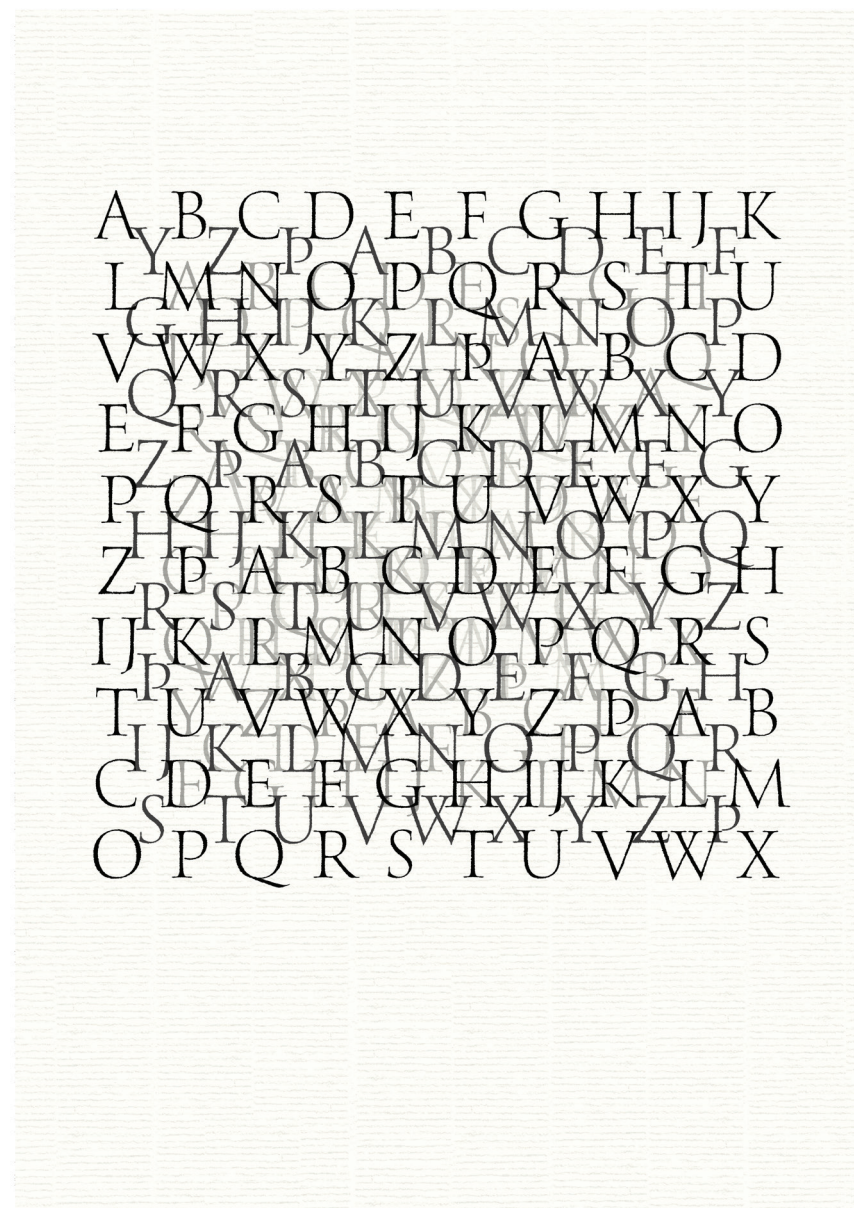


Capitals composition 4

Water-based black pigment and colour dye inks on paper

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Capitals composition 5

Water-based black pigment and colour dye inks on paper

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A3 (29.7 × 42 cm) or 11 × 17"

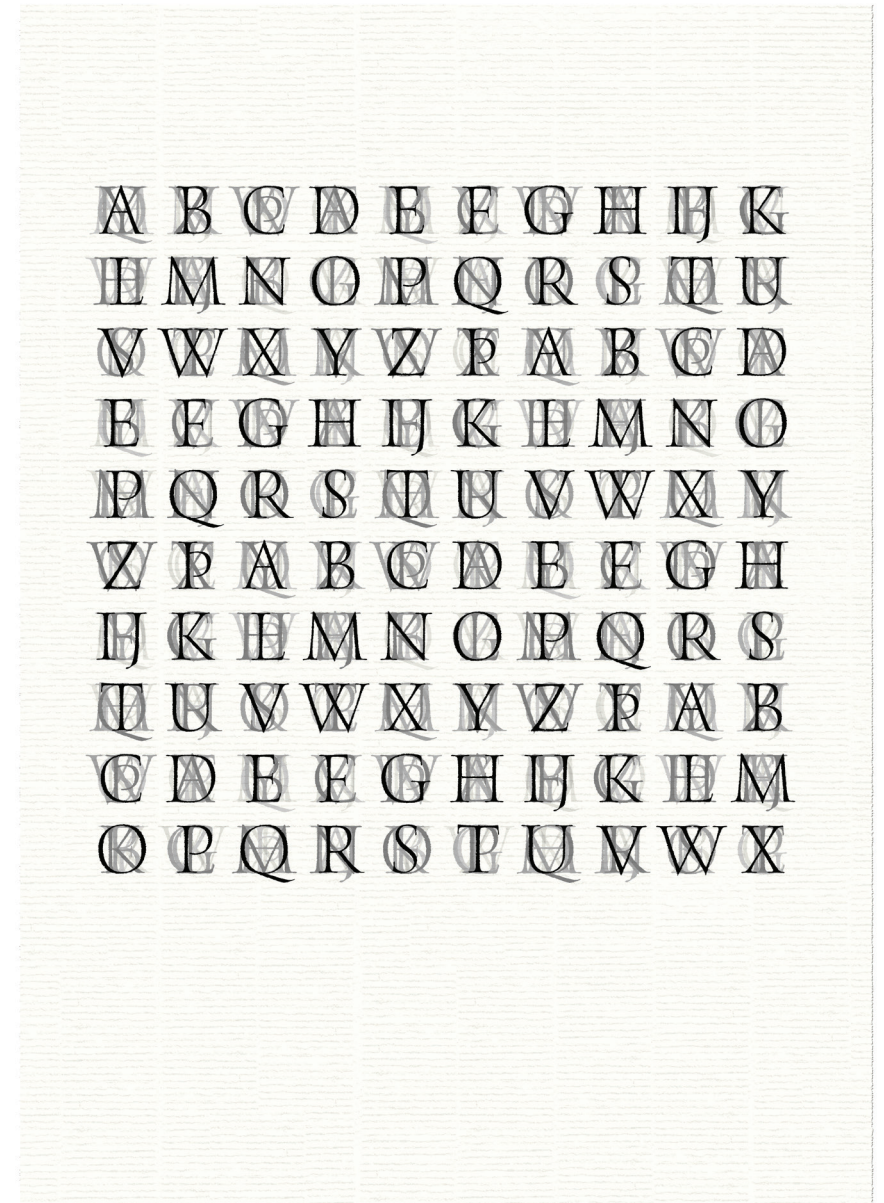


Capitals composition 3

Water-based black pigment and colour dye inks on paper

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Bold brush alphabet

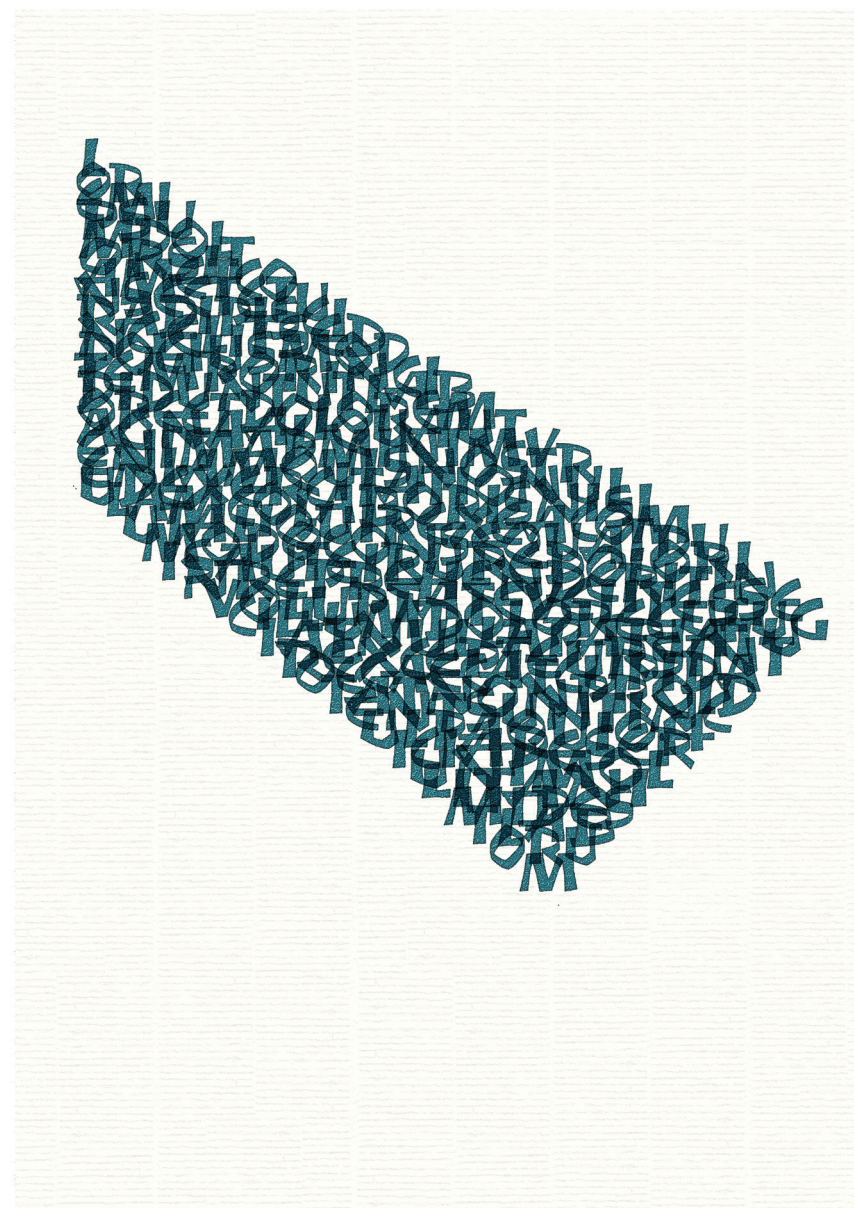
Water-based black pigment and colour dye inks on paper

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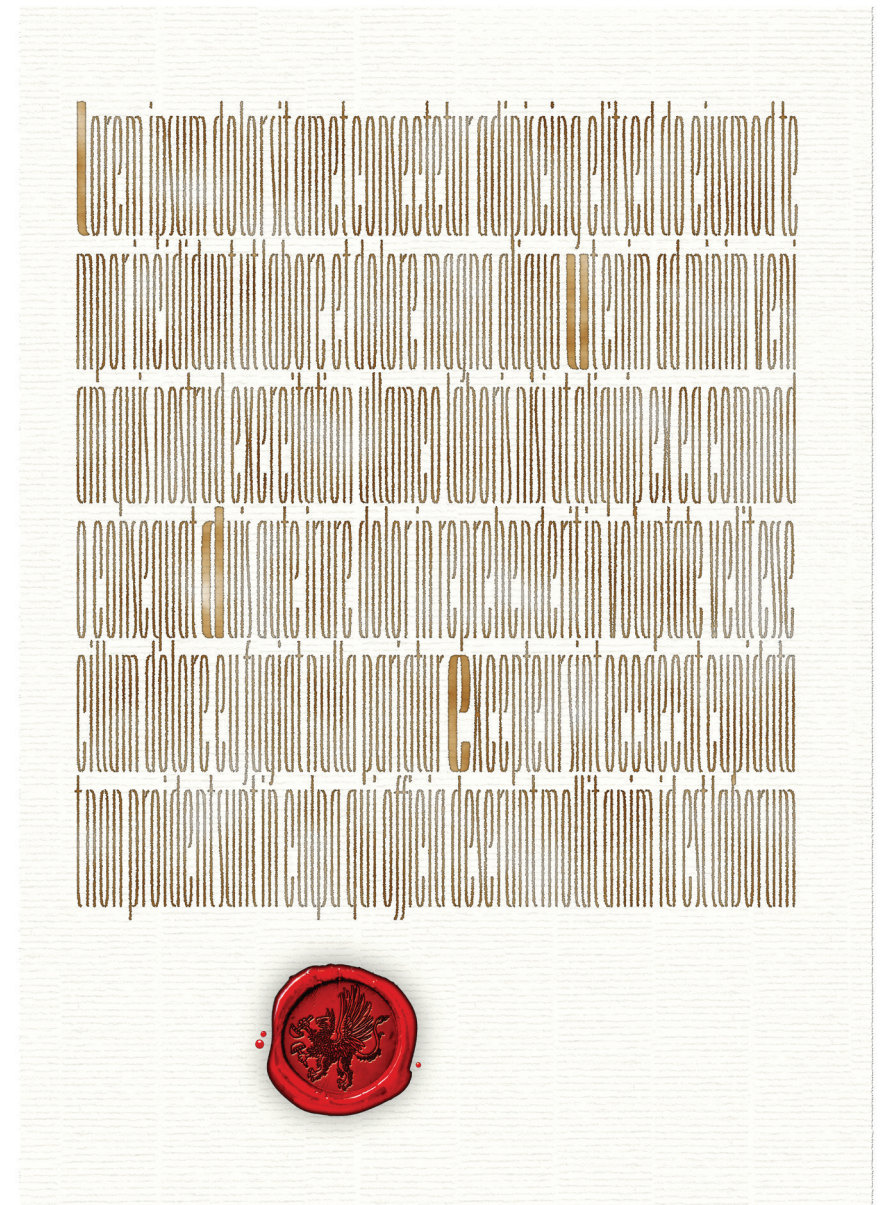
A3 (29.7 × 42 cm) or 11 × 17"



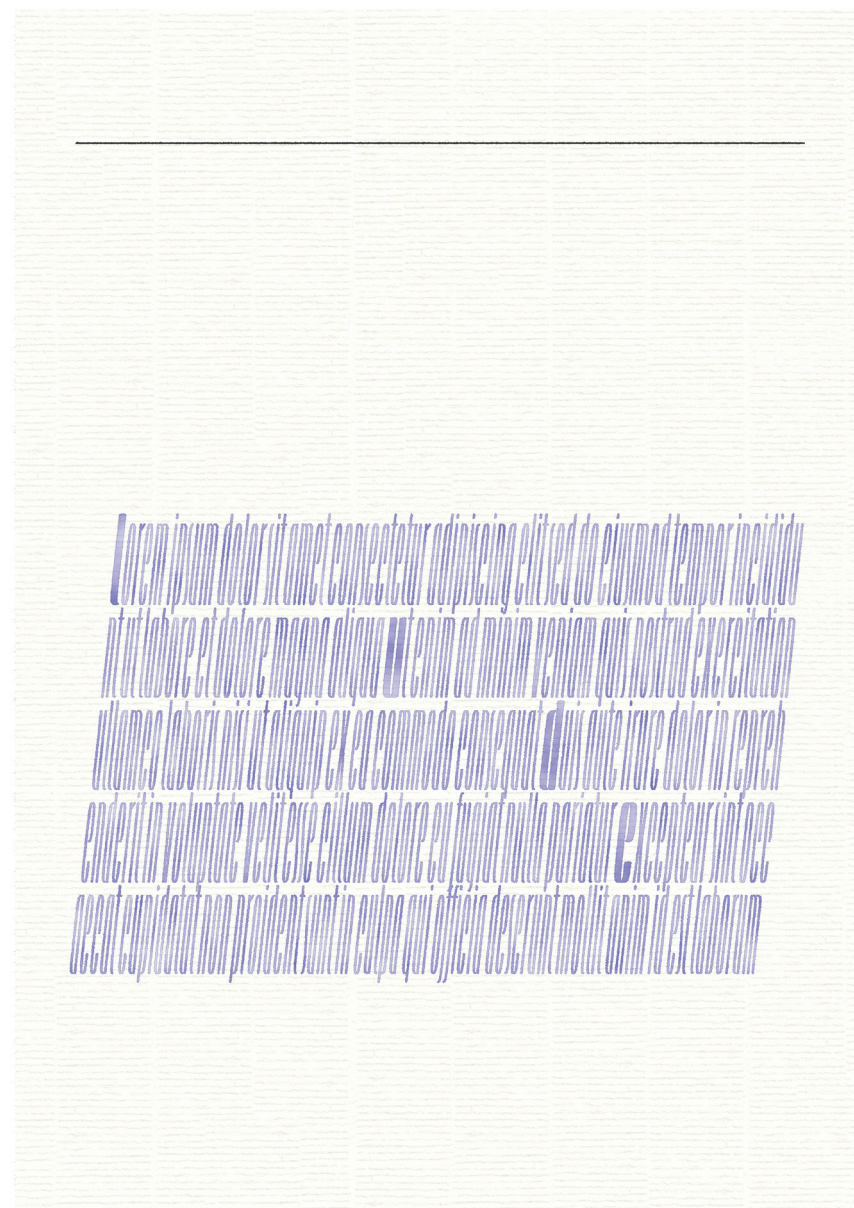
Bold brush text composition
Water-based black pigment and colour dye inks on paper
Reproduced here in 25% of original size,
A3 (29.7 × 42 cm) or 11 × 17"



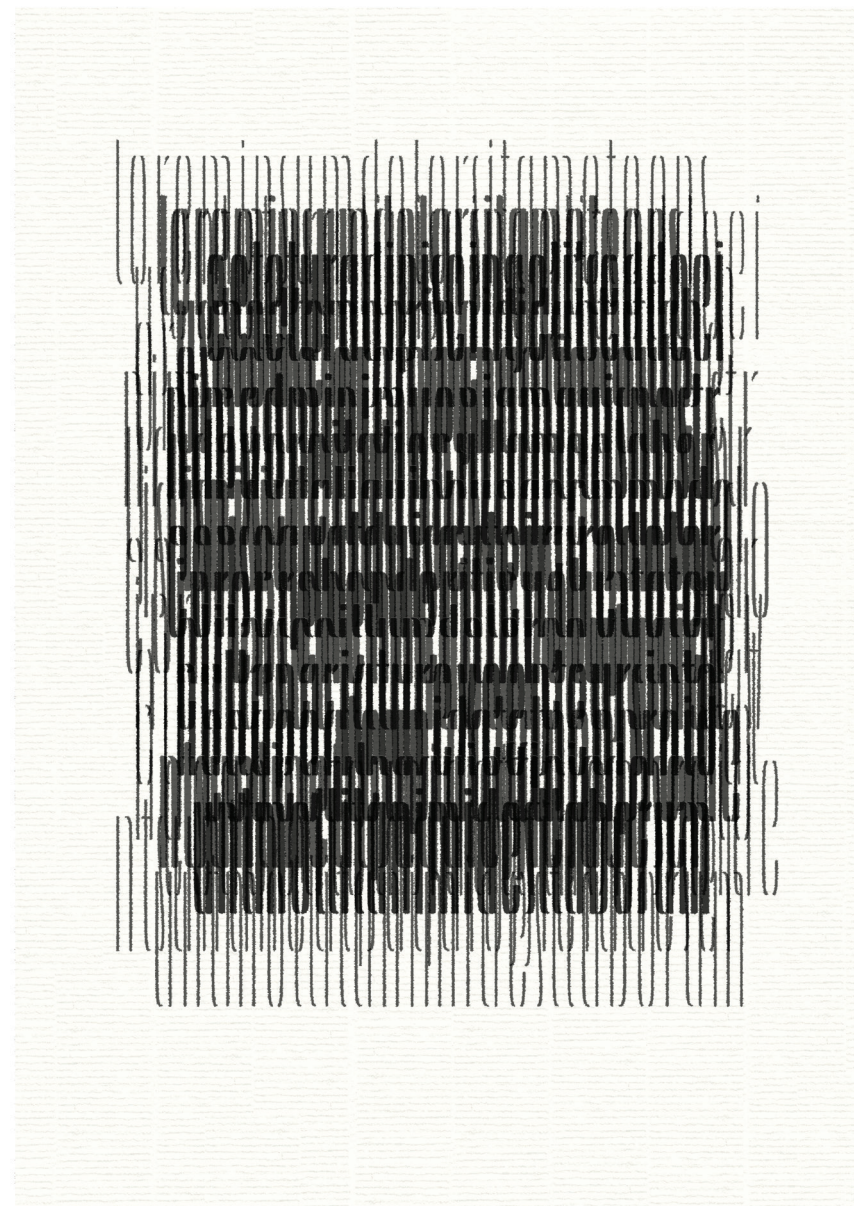
Compressed monoline text with bold capitals
Water-based black pigment and colour dye inks on paper
Reproduced here in 25% of original size,
A3 (29.7 × 42 cm) or 11 × 17"



Compressed monoline text; text composition
Water-based black pigment and colour dye inks on paper
Reproduced here in 25% of original size,
A3 (29.7 × 42 cm) or 11 × 17"



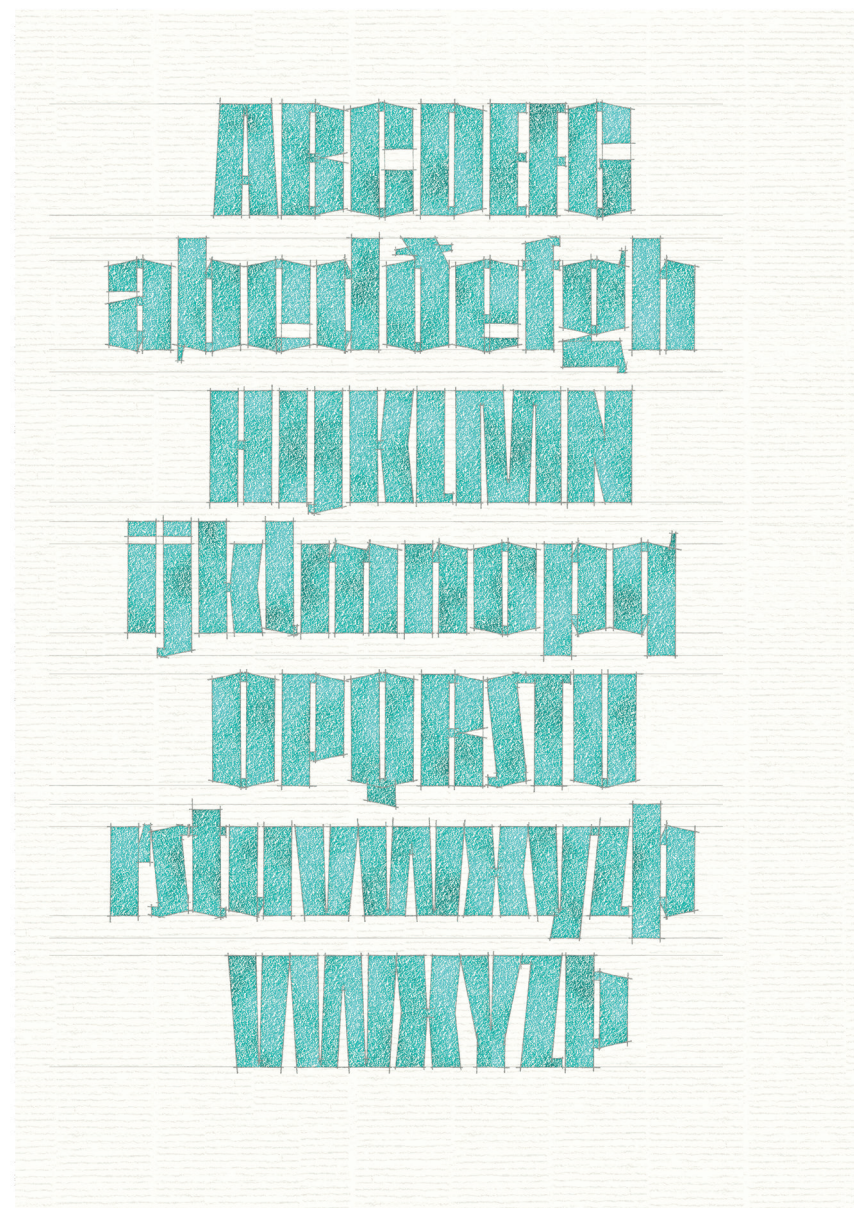
Compressed monoline letters; text composition
Water-based black pigment and colour dye inks on paper
Reproduced here in 25% of original size,
A3 (29.7 × 42 cm) or 11 × 17"



Angularity one alphabet, Latin and Cyrillic
Water-based black pigment and colour dye inks on paper
Reproduced here in 25% of original size,
A3 (29.7 × 42 cm) or 11 × 17"



Angularity three alphabet
Water-based black pigment and colour dye inks on paper
Reproduced here in 25% of original size,
A3 (29.7 × 42 cm) or 11 × 17"



Angularity one text

Water-based black pigment and colour dye inks on paper

Reproduced here in 25% of original size,

A3 (29.7 × 42 cm) or 11 × 17"

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Angularity four alphabet
Water-based black pigment and colour dye inks on paper
Reproduced here in 25% of original size,
A3 (29.7 × 42 cm) or 11 × 17"



Broad-edge italic handwriting alphabet
with flourishes

Water-based black pigment and colour dye inks on paper
Reproduced here in 25% of original size,
A3 (29.7 × 42 cm) or 11 × 17"



Broad-edge italic handwriting text
Water-based black pigment and colour dye inks on paper
Reproduced here in 25% of original size,
A3 (29.7 × 42 cm) or 11 × 17"

*Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet,
consectetur adipiscing elit, sed
do eiusmod tempor incididunt
ut labore et dolore magna
aliqua.*

*Ut enim ad minim veniam qu
is nostrud exercitation ullamco
laboris nisi ut aliquip ex ea co
modo consequat.*

*Duis aute inure dolor in repre
henderit in voluptate velit esse
cillum dolore eu fugiat nulla
pariatur.*

*Excepteur sint occaecat cupida
tat non proident, sunt in cul
pa qui officia deserunt mollit
anim id est laborum.*



Uncial alphabet with block shadow
Water-based black pigment and colour dye inks on paper
Reproduced here in 25% of original size,
A3 (29.7 × 42 cm) or 11 × 17"



Uncial text

Water-based black pigment and colour dye inks on paper

Reproduced here in 25% of original size,

A3 (29.7 × 42 cm) or 11 × 17"

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FFICIADESERUNTMOU
TANIMIDESTLABORUM

Bold brush capitals

Water-based black pigment and colour dye inks on paper

Reproduced here in 25% of original size,

A3 (29.7 × 42 cm) or 11 × 17"



Bold brush capitals, outlined; text
Water-based black pigment and colour dye inks on paper
Reproduced here in 25% of original size,
A3 (29.7 × 42 cm) or 11 × 17"

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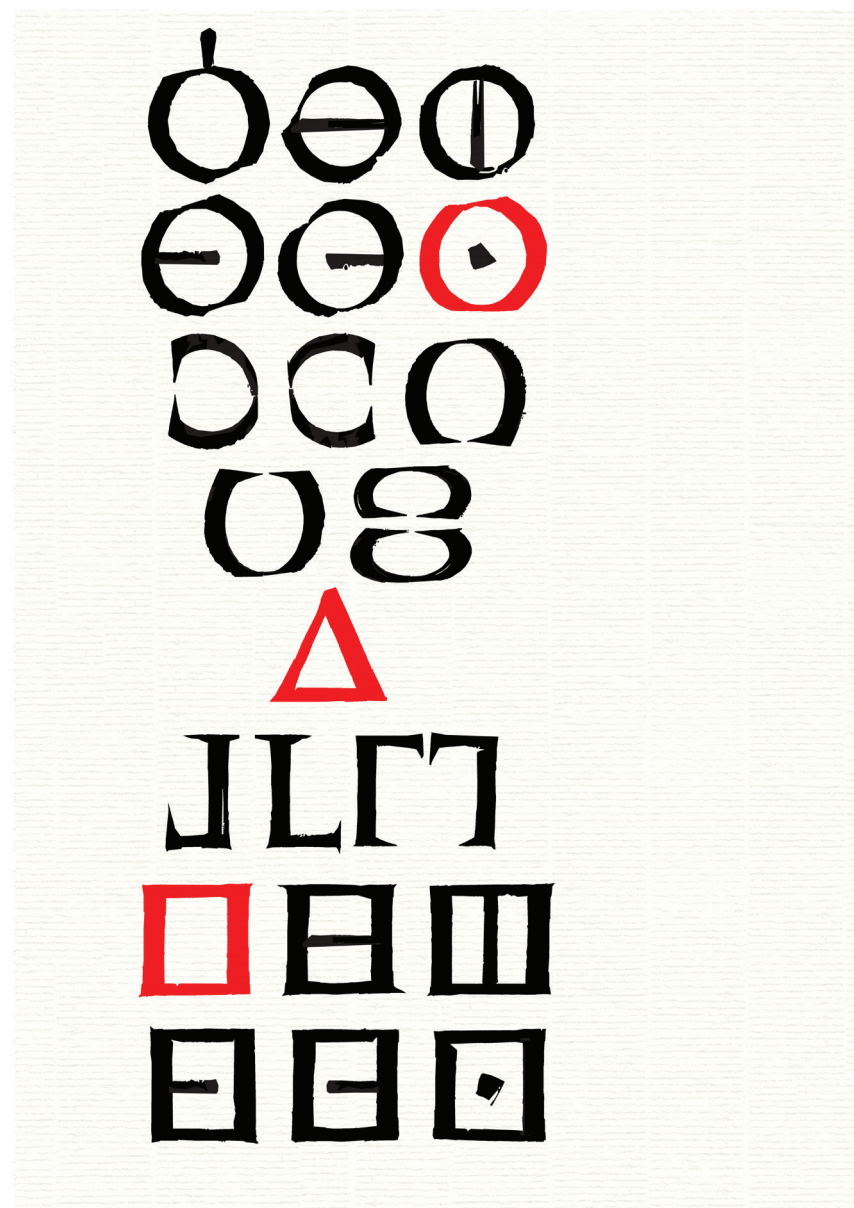
Template lower-case alphabet
Water-based black pigment and colour dye inks on paper
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Template lower-case italic alphabet
Water-based black pigment and colour dye inks on paper
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Thomas More's Utopia alphabet (1516)
Water-based black pigment and colour dye inks on paper
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A3 (29.7 × 42 cm) or 11 × 17"

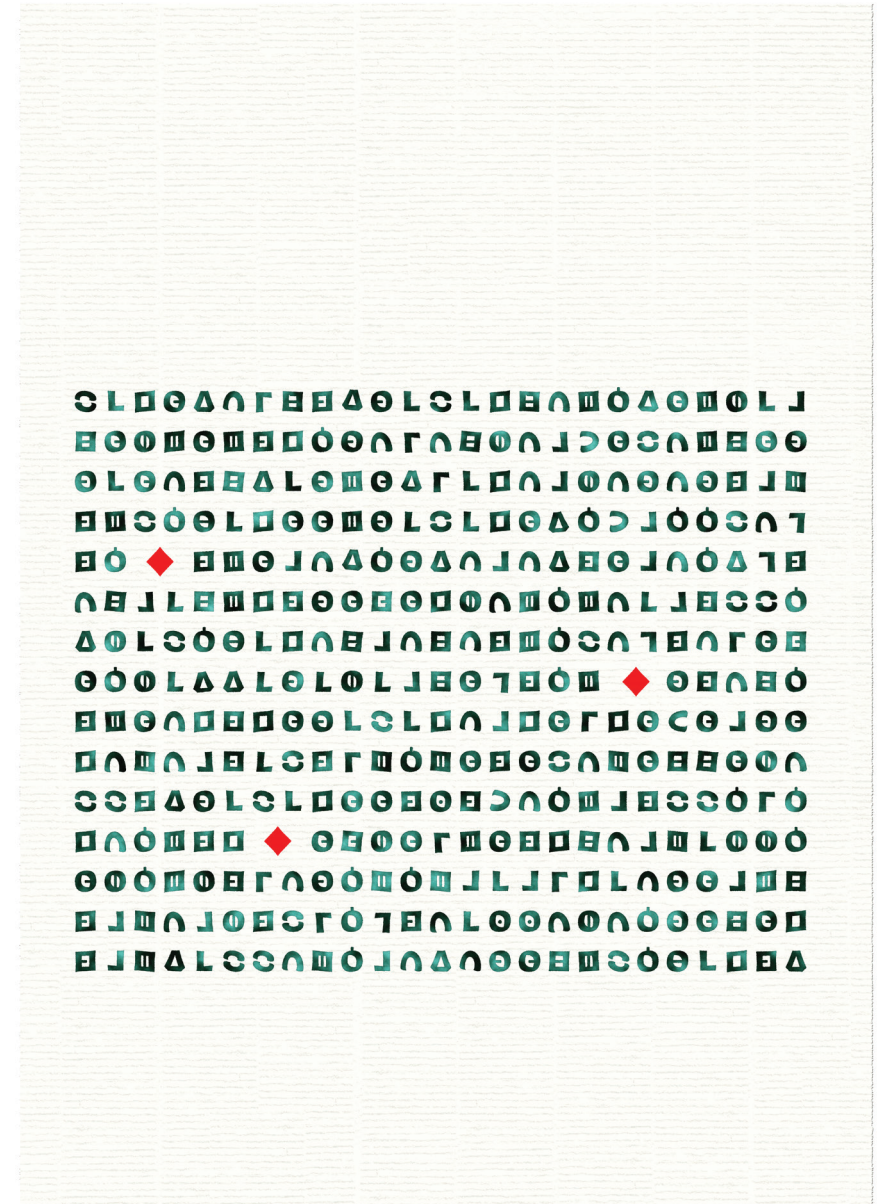


Utopia text composition

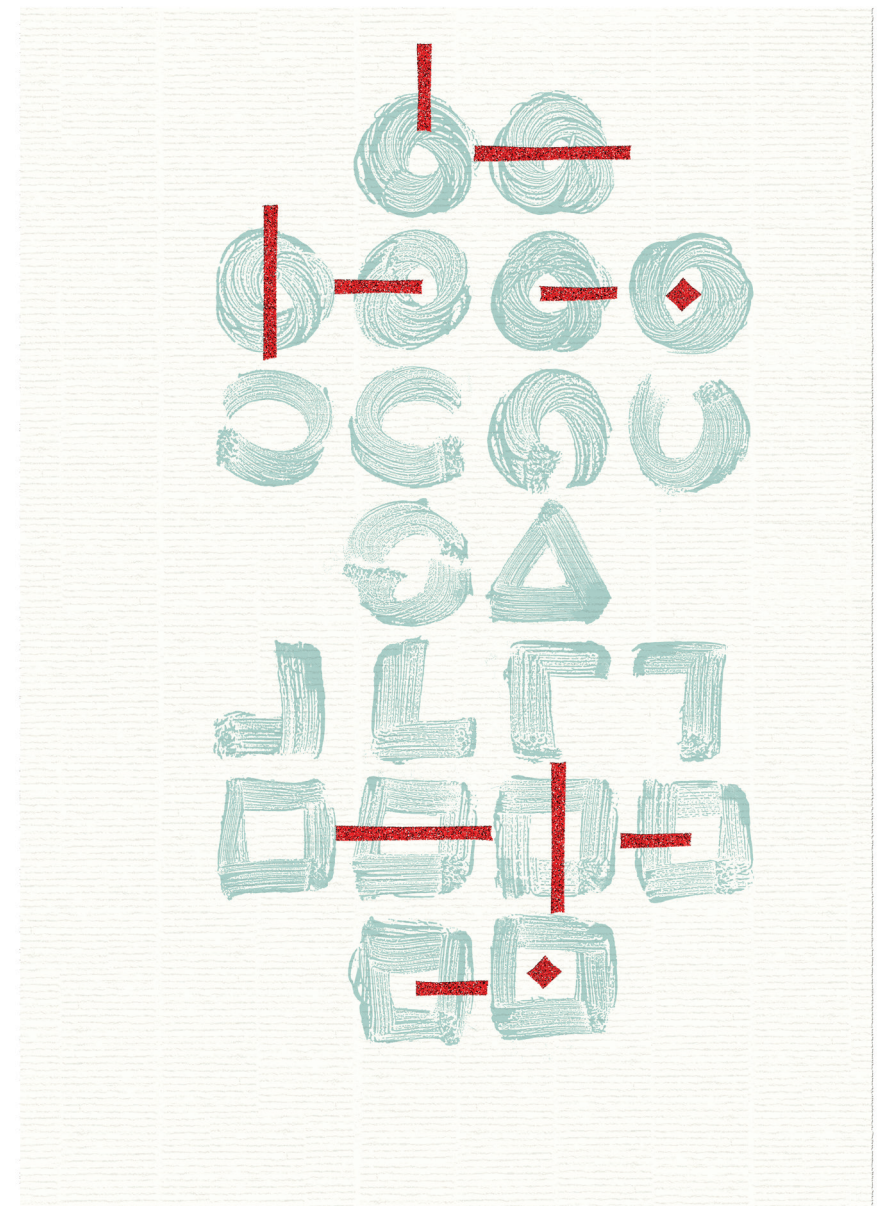
Water-based black pigment and colour dye inks on paper

Reproduced here in 25% of original size,

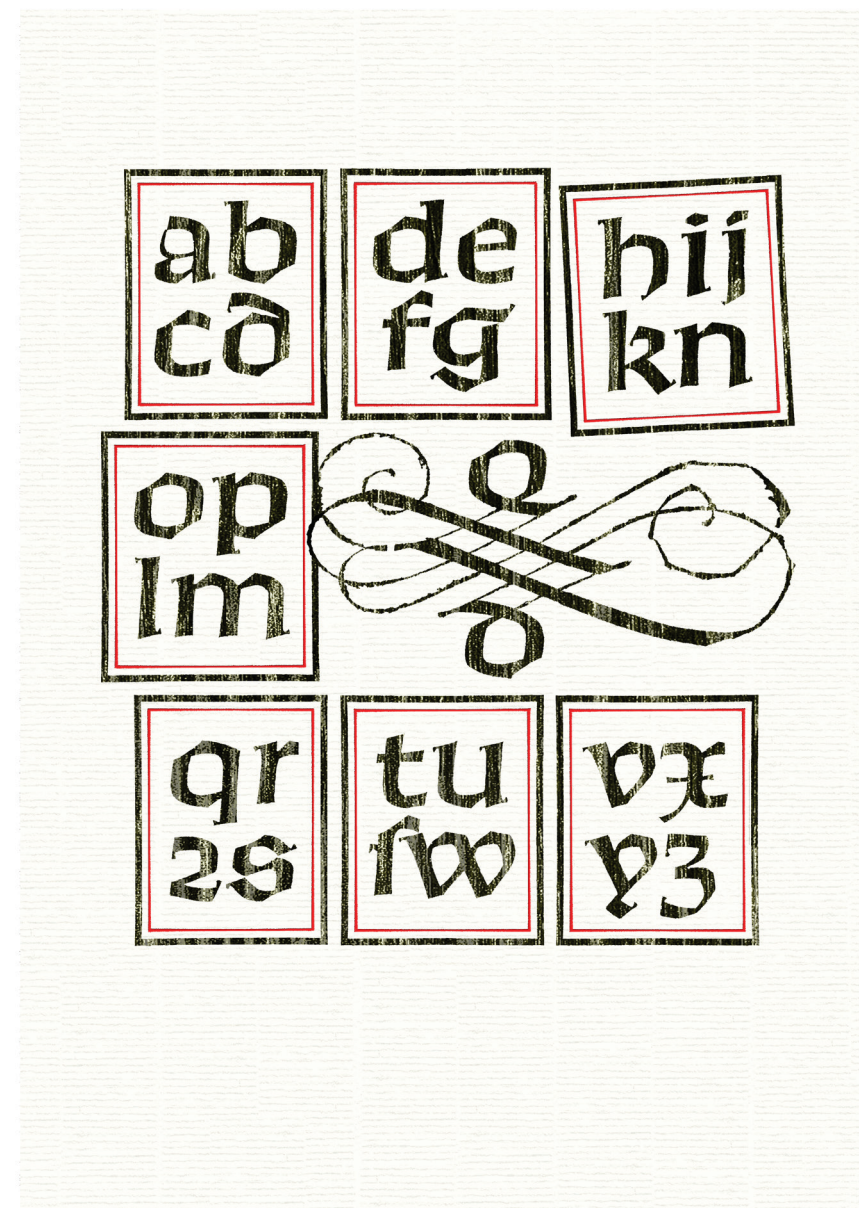
A3 (29.7 × 42 cm) or 11 × 17"



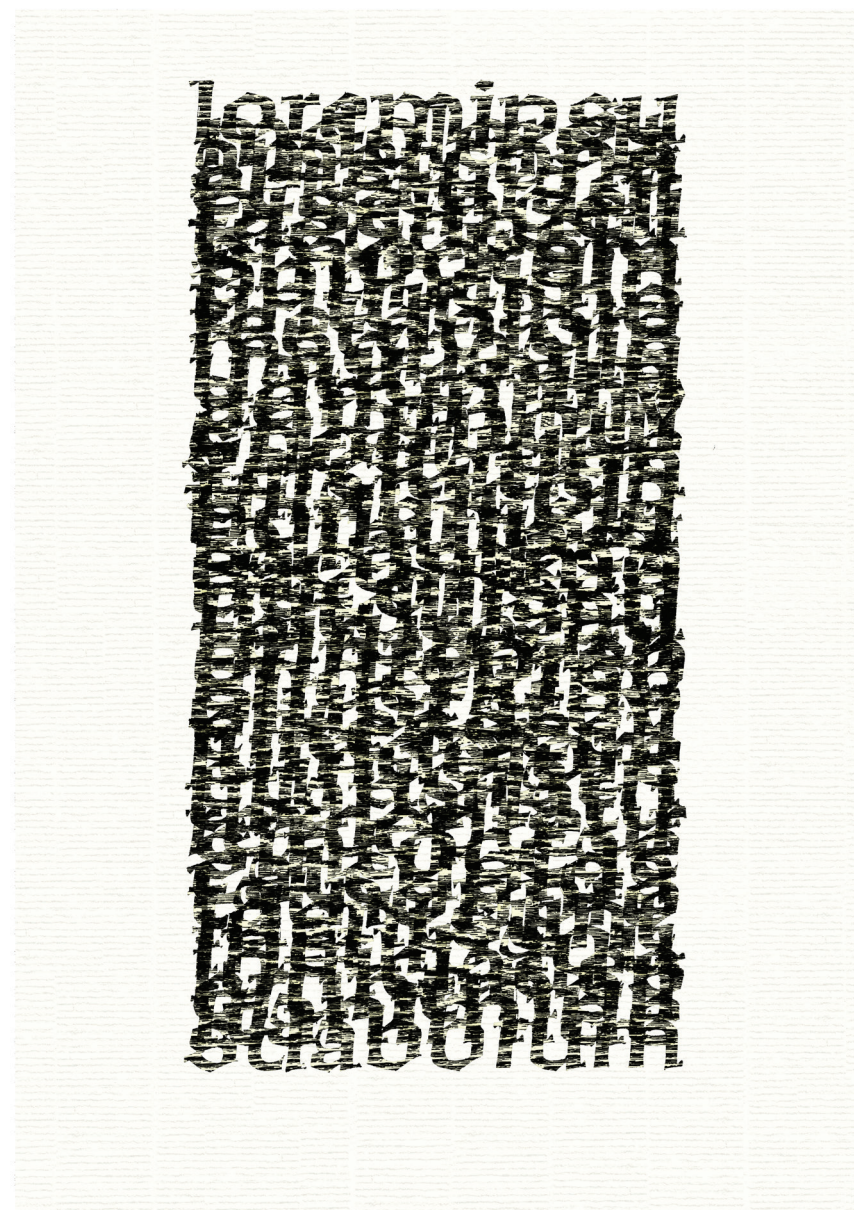
Utopia brush letter alphabet
Water-based black pigment and colour dye inks on paper
Reproduced here in 25% of original size,
A3 (29.7 × 42 cm) or 11 × 17"



Lower case blackletter, loosely inspired
by Juan de Yciar's rotunda of 1548
Water-based black pigment and colour dye inks on paper
Reproduced here in 25% of original size,
A3 (29.7 × 42 cm) or 11 × 17"



Lower case blackletter woodcut text,
composition thicket
Water-based black pigment and colour dye inks on paper
Reproduced here in 25% of original size,
A3 (29.7 × 42 cm) or 11 × 17"



Framed copperplate alphabet
Water-based black pigment and colour dye inks on paper
Reproduced here in 25% of original size,
A3 (29.7 × 42 cm) or 11 × 17"



Framed copperplate text
Water-based black pigment and colour dye inks on paper
Reproduced here in 25% of original size,
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Copperplate text thicket
Water-based black pigment and colour dye inks on paper
Reproduced here in 25% of original size,
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Rough study alphabet, capitals and minuscules
Water-based black pigment and colour dye inks on paper
Reproduced here in 25% of original size,
A3 (29.7 × 42 cm) or 11 × 17"



Rough study alphabets in light and bold,
two-pencil outlines
Water-based black pigment and colour dye inks on paper
Reproduced here in 25% of original size,
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Rough study text in several weights, crosshatched
Water-based black pigment and colour dye inks on paper
Reproduced here in 25% of original size,
A3 (29.7 × 42 cm) or 11 × 17"

Lorem ipsum
dolor sit amet, consectetur
adipiscing elit, sed do eiu
smod tempor incididunt
ut labore et dolore magna
aliqua. Ut enim ad minim
veniam, quis nostrud exer
citation ullamco laboris ni
si ut aliquip ex ea commo
do consequat. Duis aute ir
ure dolor in reprehende
rit in voluptate velit esse
cillum dolore eu fugiat
nulla pariatur. Excepte
ur sint occaecat cupidat
at non proident, sunt in cu
lpa qui officia deserunt
mollit anim id est
laborum

Spiked letters alphabet, capitals and lower case
Water-based black pigment and colour dye inks on paper
Reproduced here in 25% of original size,
A3 (29.7 × 42 cm) or 11 × 17"



Spiked letters, text composition
Water-based black pigment and colour dye inks on paper
Reproduced here in 25% of original size,
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Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet,
consectetur adipiscing elit, sed do eiusmod
tempor incididunt ut labore et dolo
re magna aliqua. **U**t enim ad minim
veniam, quis nostrud exercitation ulla
mco laboris nisi ut aliquip ex ea comm
odo consequat. **D**uis aute irure dolor
in reprehenderit in voluptate velit esse
cillum dolore eu fugiat nulla pariatur.
Excepteur sint occaecat cupidatat non
proident, sunt in culpa qui officia deser
unt mollit anim id est laborum.

Spiked letters, bold and light alphabets,
capitals and lower case
Water-based black pigment and colour dye inks on paper
Reproduced here in 25% of original size,
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Missing numbers in a background of volcanic rock
Water-based black pigment and colour dye inks on paper
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The Type Archive

Three decades ago most foundries in the Western world began selling their machinery as scrap metal. In time, software largely replaced both lead typesetting and photocomposition. When Monotype was ready to give up, Susan Shaw said no.

No.

She leased buildings that had served as a veterinary hospital for horses in 1895. Lorries were rented to fetch tons of equipment and supplies. The Type Archive was founded to provide a future for the Monotype treasure she rescued.

It is now a proud part of the Science Museum, and a working enterprise as well, with every tool needed to make hot-metal type. Apprentices learn the art and mystery of the process. The operation can supply lead type for 300 languages.

Much has been added. Business archives. One of the world's best collections of type specimen books. Punches, matrices and moulds from the principal eighteenth- and nine-teenth-century British type foundries.

Susan Shaw still delights in making impossible dreams come true, and is looking for volunteers and ambassadors.

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