

# TEXTUAL FORM

## The Rhetorics of Textual Presentation

ARTH 100  
M 3-6  
113 Jaffe

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### OUR PURPOSE

George Herbert's "Easter Wings," perhaps one of the most famous examples of concrete poetry, illustrates that a text's meaning derives not only from the words themselves, but also from their placement on the page. Typefaces, textual effects, spacing, margins, even paper quality, offer layers of meaning in addition to that carried in the words' denotations and connotations. Textual presentation is its own rhetoric. This course will examine the meanings inherent in text form. We will begin the course with a brief look at the time before text--when Plato and Socrates debated the merits of orality and literacy--then examine the evolution of writing systems, scribal culture, the Gutenberg Revolution, and the subsequent development of typographic culture over the past five-and-a-half centuries. We will end the course by looking at the aesthetics and status of text in our so-called visual culture, examining the convergence of the visual and textual in information architecture, and considering the possibility of a return to textuality, or a secondary textuality, in the digital age. The course is designed to expose students to the concepts of visual and formal rhetorics, to encourage a holistic approach to reading and literacy, and to help them to understand how communication forms shape our thinkable thoughts and ways of knowing.

### OUR TOOLS

Books available at Penn Book Center, 130 S 34<sup>th</sup> St. (34<sup>th</sup> & Sansom):

- Barnhurst, Kevin G. and John Nerone. The Form of News: A History. New York: The Guilford Press, 2001.
- Tufte, Edward. Envisioning Information. Cheshire, CT: Graphics Press, 1990.

E-Reserve, available at [courseweb.upenn.edu](http://courseweb.upenn.edu)

Once you've entered the Textual Form Blackboard site, you'll find all the course readings in the "Course Documents" section.

Includes excerpts from the following works:

- Beirut, Michael, Jessica Helfand, Steven Heller and Rick Poyner, Eds. Looking Closer 3: Classic Writings on Graphic Design. New York: Allworth Press, 1999.
- Chappell, Warren and Robert Bringhurst. A Short History of the Printed Word, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Point Roberts, WA: Hartley & Marks, 1999.
- Crowley, David and Paul Heyer, Eds. Communication in History: Technology, Culture, Society, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. New York: Longman, 1999.
- Drucker, Johanna. Figuring the Word: Essays on Books, Writing, and Visual Poetics. New York: Granary Books, 1998.
- Fletcher, Alan. The Art of Looking Sideways. New York: Phaidon, 2001.
- Gill, Eric. An Essay on Typography. Boston: David R Godine, 1988.

- Lupton, Ellen and J. Abbott Miller. Design Writing Research: Writing on Graphic Design. London: Phaidon, 1999.
- Manovich, Lev. The Language of New Media. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001.
- McLuhan, Marshall. The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man. Toronto: The University of Toronto Press, 1962.
- Rothenberg, Jerome and Steven Clay, Eds. A Book of the Book: Some Works & Projections About the Book & Writing. New York: Granary Books, 2000.
- Rowell, Margit and Deborah Wye, Eds. The Russian Avant-Garde Book, 1910-1934. New York: The Museum of Modern Art, Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 2002.
- Simon, Joan. Ann Hamilton. New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 2002.

On Reserve in the Fisher Fine Arts Library:

- Meggs, Philip B., The History of Graphic Design, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. New York: Wiley & Sons, 1998.

I have also placed on reserve copies of Fletcher's The Art of Looking Sideways, because its dynamic color may not be adequately captured in the electronic copy, and Tufte's Envisioning Information for those of you for whom the book's cost may be prohibitive.

## YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS

**Reading Log.** Anyone can skim through a book and highlight key words; only a careful reader completes a text with a firm grasp of its primary argument(s), significance, and applications. Each week, as you complete your readings, you should keep *informal* notes on each text in a reading log. Identify the text's title, author, and its major arguments; and list and briefly define its key terms. Discuss what these texts mean to you and how they contribute to your understanding of textual form. You are free to experiment with formats until you find one that works best for you—but, as a guideline, each week's entry should be roughly two pages in length. I recommend that you type your log entries in a word processing program to ensure that they are of adequate length, then cut and paste them into the body of an email message. Please email me each week's log entry by noon on Monday.

These logs are designed not only to allow you to reflect critically on the texts, to improve your reading comprehension, and to prepare you for the class discussion—but also to enable me to verify that you are carefully, thoroughly reading each week's assigned texts. The reading log is worth **15%** of your final grade.

**Attendance.** It's a small class; we'll miss you when you're gone! Besides, showing up—and staying awake and engaged—are the *very least* you can do. You will be permitted two excused absences during the semester. Subsequent absences will impact your grade, and more than four absences may prevent you from passing the course. Attendance is worth **10%** of your final grade.

**Participation.** Because this class is a seminar, your thoughtful participation is essential to its success. You are encouraged to contribute—courteously and meaningfully—to class discussions; your reading log will help you to prepare. However, if you are uncomfortable speaking in class, we can discuss other ways for you to contribute. Participation is worth **10%** of your final grade.

**First Writing Assignment/Revision.** This first paper, a 3-4-page essay, will address the pre-typographic text. A more detailed description of the assignment will be provided at least two weeks before the due date, on October 7. Please **email** me your papers in two formats: (1) as a Word/Word Perfect attachment to the email message, and (2) cut-and-pasted into the body of the message. During the following two weeks, I will assist you in revising the paper, and you will submit your revised version on October 21. The original draft is worth **10%** of your final grade, and the revision, **10%**.

**Second Writing Assignment.** The second paper, a 5-6-page essay, will address the typographic text. As with the first paper, a more detailed description of the assignment will be provided at least two weeks before the due date, on November 18. Because you will not have the opportunity to revise and resubmit this paper, it is your responsibility to seek assistance in writing the paper before the November 18 deadline. Again, I ask that you please *email* the paper as an attachment to an email message, and cut-and-pasted into the body of the email. This second paper is worth **20%** of your final grade.

**Final Project.** Throughout the semester, you will most likely come across several ideas, arenas, individuals, etc., about which or whom you would like to know more. This final project will give you the opportunity to delve deeply into a research area of personal interest. You should begin thinking about potential topics immediately—but you must make sure to email me a one-paragraph proposal *before* November 25. This research project, which should be presented in a 8-10-page paper, is worth **25%** of your final grade.

## OUR PLAN

Monday, September 9

Reading:

### **Your Brain on Parchment: Thought Represented Graphically**

Plato, excerpts from Phaedrus

<http://plato.evansville.edu/texts/jowett/phaedrus.htm>

Sections 14 (Speech and Writing) → 15 (Conclusion)

Alan Fletcher, excerpts from The Art of Looking Sideways

“Words”: pp. 436-42

“Wordplay”: pp. 455-60

“Rhetoric”: pp. 398-410

“Writing”: pp. 521-8

“Imaging”: 442-9

Monday, September 16

Reading:

### **From Clay Tokens to Alphabets: The Evolution of Writing Systems**

Crowley & Heyer, Eds., chapters from Communication in History: Technology, Culture, Society

Andrew Robinson, “The Origins of Writing”

Jack Goody & Ian Watt, “The Consequences of Literacy”

Eric Havelock, “The Greek Legacy”

Walter Ong, “Orality, Literacy, and Modern Media”

Alan Fletcher, excerpts from The Art of Looking Sideways

“Pictograms”: pp. 465-8

“Scripts”: pp. 469-73

Ellen Lupton and Abbott Miller, excerpt from Design Writing Research: Writing on Graphic Design

“Language of Dreams”: pp. 46-9  
 Alan Fletcher, excerpts from The Art of Looking Sideways  
 “Letters”: pp. 474-83  
 “Alphabet”: pp. 170-6  
 Rothenberg & Clay, Eds., chapter from A Book of the Book: Some Works & Projections About the Book & Writing  
 Charles Bernstein, “The Art of Immemorability”  
**Excursion: University of Pennsylvania Museum** (3:00-4:00)

**Sunday, September 22, 2-5pm**

**Recommended Event: Opening of Writing Surfaces: The Matter of Texts**

***What Is a Book?***

Rosenwald Gallery, 6th Floor, Penn Library  
 3420 Walnut Street, Philadelphia

*Launching the Year of the Book, this special University of Pennsylvania Library exhibition offers an encyclopedic tour of the myriad surfaces humans have used to communicate meaning. A panel of distinguished Penn faculty—Peter Stallybrass of English, Shane Butler of Classical Studies, and Millicent Marcus of Italian Studies—opens the exhibition with a discussion of what it means to call something a book.*

Monday, September 23

Reading:

**Scribal Culture**

Crowley & Heyer, Eds., chapters from Communication in History: Technology, Culture, Society  
 James Burke, “Communication in the Middle Ages”  
 Lewis Mumford, “The Invention of Printing”  
 Rothenberg & Clay, Eds., chapter from A Book of the Book: Some Works & Projections About the Book & Writing  
 Jean Francois Billeter, from “The Chinese Art of Writing”  
 John Cayley, “Writing (Under) Sky: On Xu Bing’s *Tianshu*”  
 Andrew Solomon, “Images That Speak a Language of Art,” The New York Times,  
 Holland Cotter, “Writing on the Wall, and on and the Soul,” The New York Times, September 15, 2000.  
 Beirut, Helfand, Heller, & Poynor, Eds., chapter from Looking Closer 3: Classic Writings on Graphic Design  
 Beatrice Warde, “The Crystal Goblet or Printing Should Be Invisible”

**Excursion: Special Collections, 6<sup>th</sup> Floor of Van Pelt Library** (3-4:30pm)

Monday, September 30

**The Gutenberg Revolution and the Age of Typographic Fixity**

Reading:

Marshall McLuhan, excerpts from The Gutenberg Galaxy

“The invention of typography confirmed and extended the new visual stress of applied knowledge...” (p. 124) → “A fixed point of view becomes possible with print...” (p. 127)

“Typography tended to alter language from a means of perception...” (p. 161) → “Typography is not only a technology but is in itself a natural resource or staple...” (p. 166)

“The printing press was at first mistaken for an engine of immortality...” (p. 202) → “The portability of the like that of the easel-painting...” (p. 208) book,

Crowley & Heyer, Eds., chapters from Communication in History: Technology, Culture, Society

Elizabeth Eisenstein, “The Rise of the Reading Public”

Walter Ong, “Print, Space, and Closure

Excursion:

**Special Collections, 6<sup>th</sup> Floor of Van Pelt Library** (3-4:30pm)

Monday, October 7

**Ink on Paper: Printing Technologies**

Reading:

Warren Chappel & Robert Bringhurst, excerpts from

A Short History of the Printed Word

Chapter 1: “Prologue to Discovery”

Chapter 2: “The Alphabet”

Chapter 3: “Type: Cutting and Casting”

Chapter 4: “Incunabula: 1440-1500”

(Out-of) Home-

Work:

By today you should have visited the **Franklin Court**

**Printing Office and Bindery**, 320 Market Street (between 3rd and 4th Streets)

Weekdays: 10-3, Weekends: 10-5

*Please bring to class proof of your attendance.*

**FIRST WRITING ASSIGNMENT DUE**

**CLASS BEGINS AT 4:30PM TODAY!**

In-Class

Excursion:

**University of the Arts**, 333 S. Broad St., 9<sup>th</sup> Floor (4:30pm)

**Tour of Book Arts and Printmaking Facilities**

Monday, October 14

Reading:

**Research Skills Workshop / Textual Environments**

Rothenberg & Clay, Eds., chapter from A Book of the Book: Some Works & Projections About the Book & Writing

Allan Kaprow, "Words: An Environment"

Thomas A. Vogler, "When a Book Is Not a Book"

Johanna Drucker, chapter from Figuring the Word: Essays on Books, Writing, and Visual Poetics

"Language in the Landscape"

**Excursion:**

**Fisher Fine Arts Library** (3-4pm)

Monday, October 21

Reading:

**Typography**

Beirut, Helfand, Heller, & Poynor, Eds., chapter from Looking Closer 3: Classic Writings on Graphic Design

Frederic W. Goudy, "I Am Type"

Alan Fletcher, excerpt from The Art of Looking Sideways

"Typography": pp. 349-55

"Trademarks": pp. 512-20

Eric Gill, An Essay on Typography

Chapter 2: "Lettering"

Chapter 3: "Typography"

Beirut, Helfand, Heller, & Poynor, Eds., chapters from Looking Closer 3: Classic Writings on Graphic Design

Anthony Froshaug, "Typography Is a Grid"

SKIM Philip B. Meggs, A History of Graphic Design (on reserve)

**REVISION OF FIRST WRITING ASSIGNMENT DUE**

Monday, October 28

Reading:

**Form and Content: The Book, The Page, The Text, The Message**

Ellen Lupton and Abbott Miller, excerpts from Design Writing Research: Writing on Graphic Design

"Body of the Book": 50-2

"Period Styles: A Punctuated History": pp. 32-9

"Laws of the Letter": pp. 53-61

Rothenberg & Clay, Eds., chapters from A Book of the Book: Some Works & Projections About the Book & Writing

Steve McCaffery and bpNichol, from "The Book as Machine"

Karl Young, "Notation and the Art of Reading"

William Everson, from "The Poem as Icon—  
Reflections on Printing as a Fine Art"

Keith A. Smith, "The Book as Physical Object"

Michael Davidson, "The Material Page"

Monday, November 4

Reading:

### **The Isms of Book Design**

Ellen Lupton & Abbott Miller, excerpt from Design Writing Research: Writing on Graphic Design

“Graphic Design in America”: pp. 168-202

The Museum of Modern Art (Eds., Margit Rowell & Deborah Wye), excerpts from The Russian Avant-Garde Book, 1910-1934

“Art Issues/Book Issues: An Overview”

“A Game in Hell, Hard Work in Heaven:

Deconstructing the Canon in Russian Futurist Books”

“Primitivism in Russian Futurist Book Design 1910-14”

“Kruchenykh Contra Gutenberg”

“Constructivist Book Design: Shaping the Proletarian Conscience”

Beirut, Helfand, Heller, & Poynor, Eds., chapter from Looking Closer 3: Classic Writings on Graphic Design

El Lissitzky, “Our Book”

**Excursion:** **Special Collections, 6<sup>th</sup> Floor of Van Pelt Library** (3-4:30pm)

Monday, November 11

Reading:

### **Shaping The Public Agenda: Designing the Newspaper**

Kevin G. Barnhurst & John Nerone, excerpts from The Form of News: A History

Chapter 1: “The Form of News: Style, Production, and Social Meaning, 1750-2000,” pp. 1-25

Chapter 2: “The Founding Forms: Politics and the Work of Newspapers, 1750-1850,” pp. 31-41, 51-65

Chapter 3: “Commercialization: The Newspaper and the Market Revolution, 1780s-1880s,” pp. 68-106

SKIM Parts III and IV

Ellen Lupton & Abbott Miller, excerpt from Design Writing Research: Writing on Graphic Design

“McPaper: USA Today and the Journalism of Hope”: pp. 142-55

**Presentation:** **Lou Ureneck from the *Philadelphia Inquirer***

**Tuesday, November 12, 5:00–6:30 pm**

Recommended Event: **Charles Jencks at the Penn Humanities Forum**

***The Revenge of the Book***

*Architecture's brilliant, sometimes controversial, theorist, pre-eminent interpreter of post-modern architecture, and renowned storyteller considers the importance of the book in the history, conception, design, and construction of buildings.*

Monday, November 18

**Contemporary Textual Artists: Barbara Kruger, Ann Hamilton, Jenny Holzer**

Reading: Johanna Drucker, chapter from Figuring the Word: Essays on Books, Writing, and Visual Poetics  
“The Art of the Written Image”

Joan Simon, excerpts from Ann Hamilton  
The Capacity of Absorption: pp. 64-72  
Palimpsest: pp. 77-83  
Indigo Blue: pp. 103-7  
Tropos: pp. 140-6  
Lineament: pp. 150-5  
San Francisco Public Art Project: pp. 175-8

Jenny Holzer

Truisms: <http://mfx.dasburo.com/art/truisms.html>  
<http://www.walkerart.org/realpointers/audio/holzer2.ram>

**Excursion: Special Lecture and Exhibition: Rediscovering Books as Physical Objects**

*The Library Company of Philadelphia*  
1314 Locust Street, Philadelphia  
**5-7:30pm**

*Treat yourself to an uncommon lecture by Penn's eminent scholar of material texts, Peter Stallybrass. Then enjoy a rare 1920s silent documentary film showing the arduous labor once required to make paper, and see exhibits—many on display for the first time—that chronicle the decisive role of typesetters, editors, publishers, binders, salesmen, and even readers in the making, re-making, and marketing of books in earlier times.*

**SECOND WRITING ASSIGNMENT DUE**

Monday, November 25

**Visualizing Data**

Reading: Edward Tufte, Envisioning Information

Presentation: **Omer Baristiran, Digital Media Design @ Penn**



Monday, December 2

Reading:

### Post-typographic Text

Lev Manovich, excerpts from The Language of New Media

"What Is New Media?": pp. 18-48

Malcolm Gladwell, "The Social Life of Paper," The New Yorker, March 25, 2002

Matthew Mirapaul, "A Word Map for Wonderland?

Curioser and Curioser," The New York Times, April 15, 2002

**Wednesday, December 4, 5PM**

**Recommended Event: Andre Schiffrin at the Penn Humanities Forum**

*Learn about the world of not-for-profit publishing from The New Press founder and Pantheon Books former editor Andre Schiffrin. Operated in the public interest, The New Press was established in 1990 as a major alternative to the large, commercial publishers*

Monday, December 9

### Student Presentations Semester Synthesis Course Evaluations

#### Also of Interest:

##### **IMPRINT: A Public Art Project, September 3 - November 9, 2002**

IMPRINT, Philadelphia's first major billboard exhibition and the city's largest temporary public art project to date, is supported with a \$181,516 grant awarded by The Pew Charitable Trusts: Philadelphia Exhibitions Initiative. "The concept of IMPRINT comes directly from its definition: The act of making an indelible impression on the senses and the mind. Each public site (billboards, bus shelters, newspapers, coffee cups) uses the multiplicity of the print to reach the public on familiar turf - driving, buying coffee and reading the newspaper. These sites, usually used for commercial advertising, offer an ideal format for public art. They offer the advantage of art embedded within the context of daily life, bringing art to people rather than people to art. By subverting expectation, they offer an idea rather than sell a product," according to project curator Joan Wadleigh Curran.

"Several other major cities including New York, Los Angeles and Vienna, have staged billboard exhibitions, but the diversity of sites offered by IMPRINT exceeds them all," said Print Center Executive Director Christine Filippone, "IMPRINT will bring art and ideas to more than 14 million people." The six artists chosen for IMPRINT each deal with issues in their work pertinent to the public discourse: aging, race and ethnicity, gender and class. The artists whose work will be on display simultaneously are Kerry James Marshall (Chicago, IL), John Coplans (New York, NY), Dotty Attie (New York, NY), James Mills, Virgil Marti and Susan Fenton (Philadelphia, PA). Beginning in September, their work will be seen:

- On forty sites: billboards and bus shelters in the Greater Philadelphia area, the Main Line, King of Prussia, Oxford Valley and Cherry Hill, NJ; The primary billboards will be located on major expressways: 76, 676, 95, Rt. 1 and 291.
- On 300,000 paper coffee cups to be distributed free with coffee purchased at coffee shops throughout the city of Philadelphia and at the cafés of the Philadelphia Museum of Art and the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Art.
- In six full-page, full-color "collectible prints" in the Philadelphia Inquirer's Sunday Magazine, one per week, for six consecutive weeks (September 8 - October 13).
- The artists will conceptually unite the three public components of the project in installations of their work at The Print Center

[http://www.printcenter.org/pc\\_press.html](http://www.printcenter.org/pc_press.html)

## **First Assignment: Artifact Analysis**

Both the University Museum and the Special Collections at Van Pelt are full of amazing textual artifacts that we simply haven't had time to look at. Choose any pre-typographic material text at the Museum or at Van Pelt (or any other location that you propose and I approve)—preferably not something that we've already discussed in detail—and analyze its spatial and physical properties. You should start out by offering a brief description of the object, then ask yourself what you can read *through* the object—that is, without even considering what the “words” mean. You might consider *some* of these questions: What does this text tell me about its creator(s), and the culture that created it? What does this text tell me about the nature of writing at the time of its creation? What type of human-text interaction does this artifact promote? What meaning do the spatial and formal properties of this artifact convey? What does this text tell us about how its creators conceptualized knowledge and learning? You'll need to sufficiently narrow your focus to thoroughly address your chosen topic in a three- to four-page essay, which is due on October 7.

## **Second Assignment: WordSpaces**

Krapow and Drucker examine ways in which texts construct our physical environments and the way we experience those environments. Meanwhile, Vogler offers several examples of texts--specifically, books--taking on different identities as physical objects, and, in the process, calling into question their very "bookness."

This second assignment calls for a paradigm shift: you'll need to synch the language and vision parts of your brain in order to look at, or read, your physical environment as a text. I'd like for you to photograph places or instances in which text functions to construct, organize, assign, limit, hierarchize, etc., your world. The scope of your project is up to you. You may either focus on one particular image, or draw comparisons from or identify themes in a collection of images. Ask yourself: How does this image show us how text functions in the construction of space? What is text's role in this physical environment? How does text impact people's experience of this space? Or, how does this space work as a text? What can I read from this text-space?

For example, you might examine the Morris Arboretum as a "catalogue space"--a physical catalogue of trees. You could analyze the symbolic and political functions of the LOVE word-sculpture in LOVE Park. You might examine the use of signage to delineate neighborhood boundaries. You could look at the differences between two different shop signs carrying similar texts, but conveying those texts in different ways. You could examine how environmental texts help to discipline people in public spaces.

Look for the unobvious. Draw attention to those textual elements of our environment that are so prevalent that we rarely pay attention to them.

Please submit your photo(s) and a \*hard-copy\* of an accompanying five-page essay by November 18. And please...have fun!