

POSITIONS THROUGH TRIANGULATING - WRITING (ANTITHESIS)
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In graphic design and multimedia, J. Abbott Miller highlights in *The Graphic Design Reader* that two main paths for the evolution of dimensional typography—both of which are redefining how we approach type today.

The first direction looks at typography as a sculptural, three-dimensional investigation, treating letterforms as spatial and temporal objects. This approach isn't just about arranging letters on a flat surface; it's about pushing the boundaries of what letters can do when treated as physical forms. It opens up new creative opportunities but also brings a sense of responsibility—to harness this extra dimension to enhance both the visual and editorial impact of the text. It shifts focus to the intrinsic qualities of individual characters, inviting us to rethink their formal properties.

The second direction resonates with the way we engage with text—moving through it, layer by layer, like peeling back the surface to uncover more meaning. It deals with how 'flat' letterforms can be arranged to create the illusion of depth through layering, offering a new perspective on how typography occupies space referring to compositions by Muriel Cooper.

When I started Unit 2, I found myself torn between these two approaches but chose to dive deeper into the second one. It felt like a natural progression for me, as I was interested in how typography can manipulate the reader's spatial experience, especially in a digital context. However, one thing remained consistent in both directions: the need to address the reader. This brought up core concerns about the functionality of design, which ties into what the typography (in my studio work) is trying to convey and how the reader interprets it.

Even in projects like spatial design for 3D environments or designing typefaces for AR and VR, where my aim has been to challenge the limits of 2D and explore new territories, the issue of functionality always circles back. Unlike traditional 2D mediums (such as print or screen design), VR and AR require designers to think spatially. Typography in VR or AR doesn't just sit on a flat plane; it interacts with a three-dimensional environment and can be experienced from multiple angles, distances, and perspectives.

This shift has practical implications. In traditional media, legibility is a central concern because it directly impacts usability and readability. However, in AR and VR environments, typography must not only be legible but also functional within the immersive experience. How type interacts with the user's spatial perception becomes a critical design parameter. Throughout my studio practice I have been attempting to move away from a purely functional focus on legibility but these concerns inevitably resurface. At the end of the day, the user—the reader—holds the control over the meaning, and legibility and usability gives the designer a little bit more control over the interpreted meaning.

Engaging in studio experiments have brought forward one of the key tensions, which is the struggle to balance creative freedom with the practical need for functionality in design. An article by Niteesh Yadav, *Designing for AR/ VR for Google Fonts* highlights that tension through a very detailed spatial classification of typography in AR/ VR with a main focus on readability and legibility.

This made me raise questions like: To what extent can designers prioritize creativity over functionality? When designing for immersive technologies like AR and VR, where user experience is paramount, this tension becomes even more pronounced. The immersive nature of these environments means that users expect a seamless experience, and if typography or other design elements fail to function in a way that enhances usability, the overall experience suffers. On the one hand, there is the desire to push the boundaries of what design can be, moving into more experimental, less traditionally functional realms. On the other hand, there is the recognition that design must still serve a purpose, especially when users interact with it in dynamic and immersive spaces like VR and AR.

The role of the user in determining the meaning of design is the center of this back and forth. While I have tried to break away from functional design concerns, they are still anchored by the user's role as the ultimate receiver of the work. This highlights a key principle of design theory: meaning is co-created between the designer and the user. No matter how experimental or avant-garde a design might be, it still must be interpreted by the user, who brings their own set of experiences, perceptions, and expectations to the interaction. The challenge now is to create something that is both innovative and interpretable by the user—without losing sight of the functionality that makes the experience meaningful and accessible.

Michael Worthington in *The New Seduction: Movable Type* speaks to this in a way that aligns with my thinking. Designers are now faced with new, complex considerations that come with interactive and motion-based media. Typography in motion, understood in relation to time, becomes a powerful tool for conveying complex information—balancing what's said outright with what's implied, using movement to direct attention, pace, and meaning.

The process of questioning the rules and breaking away from traditional design forms has been central to my inquiry. But even as I challenge those conventions, I'm constantly pulled back to the idea of functionality—how design works in the real world and how users will interact with it. It's this ongoing push and pull, this antithesis, that's shaping my work right now: the tension between exploring new possibilities and ensuring that the design still communicates clearly to the reader.

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