

POSITIONS THROUGH TRIANGULATING - WRITING (SYNTHESIS)
NIKUNJ TOPNO

I have been navigating the space between traditional graphic design principles and the emerging possibilities of 3D and interactive typography. By initially introducing physics variables to 2D text in Unity, I created a dynamic environment where text could shift and evolve based on physical interactions. This experiment underscored the designer's evolving role in shaping content perception and illuminated the complexities of how users engage with digital and dimensional text.

My research extended to examining typography across various media interfaces—print, digital, and immersive environments—to understand how each medium reshapes the function and perception of type. This inquiry aimed to dissect the "page" as a material and theoretical construct, borrowing from the concept of type as a carrier, inspired by the "carrier bag theory." I started looking at text in 3D not just as a flat symbol but as a dynamic form which can be in constant flux. This stance contrasts with the conventional, cognitive interaction we engage in with printed type, fostering a direct, bodily engagement with text in space.

I further contextualized this approach by recreating Wolfgang Weingart's compositions in Blender, reflecting on how three-dimensional arrangements prompt a shift in the designer's role from mere arranger of letters to creator of spatial and tactile experiences. The move from 2D to 3D typography introduces new challenges, such as directing the viewer's eye within an expansive digital "page" and reconsidering the traditional rules of alignment and layout. It opens avenues for different types of reading experiences—ones mediated by physical proximity and scale, where typography behaves more like an environment than a linear text. Reflecting on Dennis Tennen's exploration of plain text and Marshall McLuhan's theories on extended sensory experience, I see my work in 3D as part of an evolution toward interactive, immersive typographic experiences.

The impact of these early trials led me to consider how typography might behave in 3D space, prompting a series of further questions about the interaction between text, space, and the reader. This direction aligns closely with ideas presented by J. Abbott Miller in *The Graphic Design Reader*, where he identifies two key trajectories in the evolution of dimensional typography. The first treats typography as a sculptural, three-dimensional form, positioning letterforms as spatial and temporal objects with the potential to redefine visual impact and narrative pacing. The second approach focuses on creating depth in typography through layering on a two-dimensional plane, reminiscent of Muriel Cooper's work, creating a depth illusion that redefines how typography is traditionally perceived.

While contextualizing, I felt pulled between these two approaches but decided to delve into the second path, which resonated with my interest in exploring reader's perception using dimensional typography. This decision felt natural within the digital realm, where typography could enhance the reader's experience by guiding their movement and focus through layered

visual cues. Michael Worthington's observations in *The New Seduction: Movable Type* further deepened this exploration by discussing how designers today balance static and motion-based elements, using time and movement to amplify meaning. Typography becomes a flexible tool, where the pacing and orientation of type are orchestrated to emphasize the message and elicit an emotional response.

This conceptual progression sparked a shift in my practice. As I explored text in 3D, I became acutely aware of how design choices in three-dimensional space carry distinct communicative consequences, influencing readability, interaction, and aesthetic experience. I saw, for example, how arranging typography in 3D introduces an interdependency between design and communication; every spatial decision impacts how the viewer interprets the text.

REFERENCES

K, U. (1997). *Dancing at the edge of the world : thoughts on words, women, places*. New York, N.Y.: Grove.

Lupton, E. (2010). *Thinking with type: a critical guide for designers, writers, editors, & students*. 2nd ed. New York Princeton Architectural.

Lupton, E. (2014) *Type on screen : a critical guide for designers, developers, writers, and students*. New York: Princeton Architectural Press.

McLuhan, M. and Fiore, Q. (2001). *The Medium is the Massage*. Gingko Press Editions.

Rock, M. (2009). *Fuck Content — 2A~4*. [online] 2A~4. Available at: <https://2A~4.org/ideas/2009/fuck-content/>.

Tenen, D. (2017) *Plain text : the poetics of computation*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press.

Weingart, W. (2000). *Typography*. Baden, Switzerland: Lars Müller] ; [New York, Ny.

Teal Triggs, Atzmon, L., William Addison Dwiggins, Morris, W., Beegan, G., Margolin, V., J Abbott Miller and Heller, S. (2019). *The graphic design reader*. London ; New York: Bloomsbury Visual Arts.

Communication Arts. (2010). *Pioneer: Muriel Cooper*. [online] Available at: <https://www.commarts.com/features/pioneer-muriel-cooper>.

Google Fonts. (n.d.). *Designing for AR/VR – Fonts Knowledge*. [online] Available at: https://fonts.google.com/knowledge/using_type_in_ar_and_vr/designing_for_ar_vr.