UIC

A2Z: Learning through LEGO® and Letterforms

Photo: Martin Hernandez (UIC)

Quite unknowingly, this project started in Coimbra, Portugal, while doing my undergraduate degree in Design Multimedia. I had the chance to attend a graduate class with **Artur Rebelo** (**R2 Design**), where students were tasked to design a modular alphabet. As someone with minimal experience with type design, I was struck by the excitement of generating letterforms simply by using pre-existing modules. Almost like a playful game of moving pieces around, with the goal of finding exciting combination points and relationships between them.

My natural inability to draw freehand always made me rely on tools, machines, and systems as an extension of my production and thought process. Using a modular approach to design a letterform felt very natural to me, as opposed to the calligraphic nature of traditional type design.

At the **University of Illinois Chicago** (UIC), now as a faculty member, I developed a syllabus for a graduate course that focused on the use of the modularity of a system to design letterforms and other typographic compositions. The chosen system was **LEGO®**: an expandable yet non-scalable grid of studs with a limited amount of bricks that can be re-arranged in space. Students were challenged to create compositions utilizing this system and to reflect on the use of those restrictive tools and methods.

This assignment led to a desire to experiment and share this practice with others outside the classroom. So, I challenged a group of designers from different generations and backgrounds to design individual letterforms. Collectively, these designers would create an alphanumeric alphabet using the commercial LEGO® baseplate as a grid and the LEGO® bricks as individual modules. I imposed minimal conditions and allowed the designers to interpret my prompt in any way, shape, or form. I tried to accommodate and spark ideas that would challenge my instructions, making individual concessions along the way to make each designer's vision come true.

This project wouldn't have been possible without the inspiration of many other designers: the work of **Craig Ward**, founder of the **BrickFont** project; the experimental nature and processes of **Dafi Kühne**'s letterpress printed posters; and the accessibility-forward letterpress kit developed by **Provisional Press** that allowed me to bring this idea into the classroom without the need of using heavy and complex equipment.

I hope this publication brings clarity to the ethos and the process of this project—how everything came together and the importance of building something with people: with students, colleagues, friends, old relationships, new relationships, and future relationships. The success of this project is shared among many minds and hands.

In the end, that is what this project is all about: to make something, put it in the world, and to let other people use and change it to make something new with it.

It's time to share and start building.

WHERE IT BEGAN

ADVANCED GRAPHIC DESIGN II

DES 511

LEGO

Using the LEGO® modular brick system, students were challenged to design and develop a series of letterforms/compositions.

The goal is to focus on the formal characteristics of a letterform, and play with the restrictions of the brick modules.

Students
Alex Domasik
Austin Watson
Gannon Novak
Hyein Chang
Izze Norman
Joe Brinckwirth
Joey Nottoli
Malcolm Thompson
Oluwaseyi Adeleke

Quentin Bu
Viviana Favela
Zixuan Chen

Faculty
Pedro Neves

Printed with
Daniel Mellis

Vandercook Universal I
20 Line Gothic #1 Wood
Pantone PMS 805

Risograph MF9450U
Blue S-4388

03/10/2022
University of Illinois at Chicago

Officially, this project began in a classroom at UIC, where I teach a course named *DES 511: Advanced Graphic Design II*. This studio class tackles advanced design problems and takes place in the first semester of the second year of the graduate program. Through presentations and informal conversations, I was able to get to know the graduate student cohort before the class started and identify areas where my contribution to their training would be most valuable.

In the Fall of 2022, I decided that this particular cohort needed to strengthen their typographic skills. We had covered various assignments from micro to macro typography, but I wanted to create something that would help them learn how to design letterforms individually. However, I am not a type designer myself, nor do I have formal experience designing typefaces. Understanding the shape of a letterform and its formal details is instrumental for any design student, but traditional type design, rooted in calligraphy and stone carving, can feel intimidating at first.

I needed to find an approach where I could confidently discuss and facilitate classroom conversations that was also accessible and efficient for our academic time frame. This led me to seek a modular system—a set of rules or restrictions that would allow students to start thinking about letterform design. Reflecting on the graduate class I attended in Coimbra, Portugal, I recalled an important insight: when students had free choice of modules, the selection of the module itself was more significant than how it was used. A strong, vibrant module would always create a cohesive letterform regardless of application. I needed a system that could provide a diverse range of outcomes while enabling foundational discussions on concepts like contrast and letterform anatomy, without being reliant on a single shape or form.

LEGO® emerged as the perfect solution. The system offered an ideal blend of fixed constraints and room for playful exploration, each brick's scale and form could not be altered but the grid's size could be individually defined. Students were free to arrange and join bricks, building up their compositions. Additionally, the enthusiasm expressed upon learning they'd be designing letterforms with LEGO® came as a key aspect to the success of this project.

In 2022, the first year I introduced this project, the students created a collective display of their work on a single table for departmental midterm critiques so their peers and professors could experience the different letterforms as a whole. I decided to design a poster for the presentation using LEGO® bricks as a printing plate, inspired by work I'd seen on social media. When I attached the LEGO® base plates to a 3/4-inch MDF board, I discovered something remarkable: the height was almost exactly American type-high (0.918 in). This serendipitous discovery revealed that two readily available materials could adapt something never intended for printing into functional printing material.

The assignment generated significant interest, so I repeated it with modifications over the next two years. I wanted to teach students how to operate the letterpress machine alongside letterform design, seeing this combined knowledge as valuable. The focus shifted from solely type design to full graphic compositions printed on a letterpress using LEGO®, lead, and wood type.

Designing letterforms with physical LEGO® bricks slowed the design process. Students had to consider each placement carefully since bricks were sometimes difficult to remove and shapes slower to modify than digital clicking. This deliberate slower pace encouraged deeper thinking and more intentional design decisions. Using LEGO® as a teaching tool for modular letterform design, typographic composition, and printing revealed endless possibilities. The system helps students grasp the subtle nuances of letterform design, while maintaining an engaging, accessible entry point into complex typographic concepts. I hope students carry these learnings into their professional practice and continue exploring modularity and systematic thinking as a design-making approach.

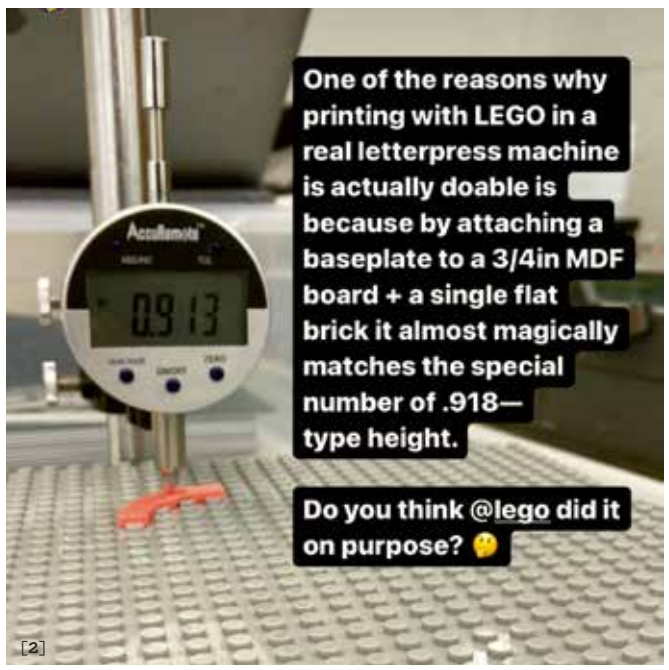
The assignment's evolution over three years demonstrates how a simple, well-conceived constrained activity can grow into a rich, multifaceted learning experiences that honor both historical printing traditions and contemporary design educational needs.

I would like to thank all my students who were part of this class, as their experiments and ideas deeply inspired this project. Their dedication and desire to explore the boundaries of what a letterform could look like set the stage for the nature of this project and its success.

`DES511 SPRING 2022`: Alex Domasik, Austin Watson, Gannon Novak, Hyein Chung, Izze Norman, Joe Brinckwirth, Joey Nottoli, Malcolm Thompson, Oluwaseyi Adeleke, Quentin Bu, Viviana Favela, Zixuan Chen.

`DES511 SPRING 2023`: Emma Dwyer, Hailee Talbot, Jarin Moriguchi, Lauren Covey, Michelle Hernandez, Raeann Van Zee.

`DES511 SPRING 2024`: Anagha Deshmukh, Daniel Fain, Elena Franck, Grace Luxton, Nahid Yahyaee, Ziyu Wang.



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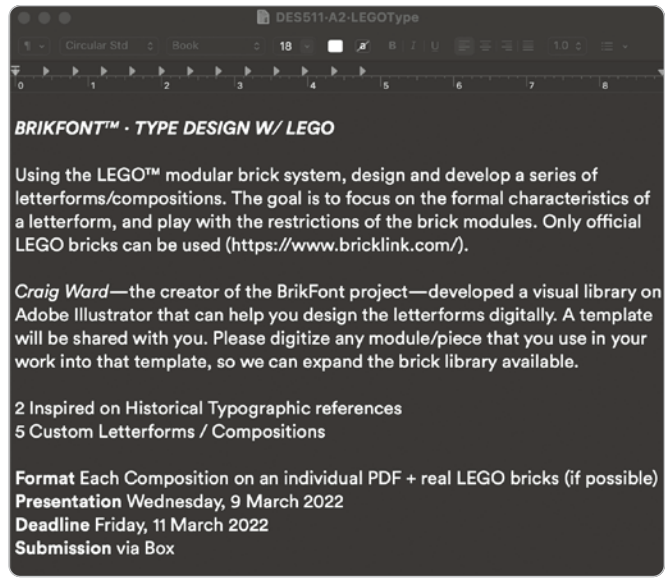

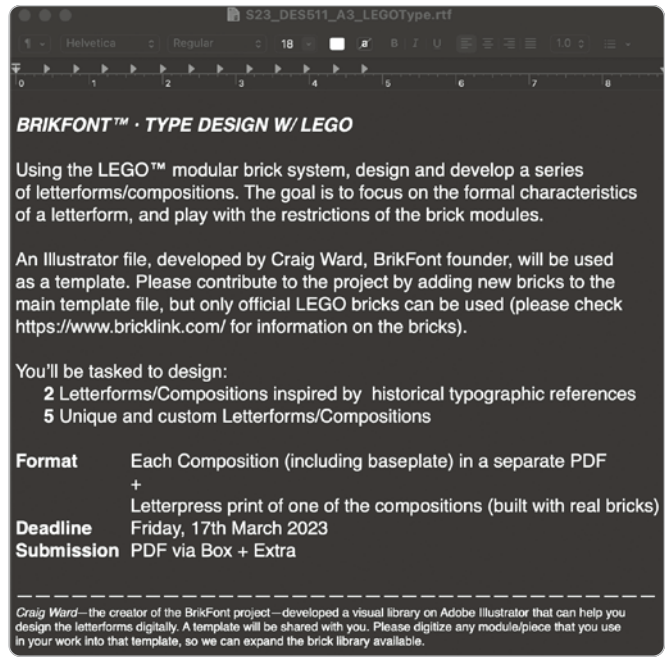

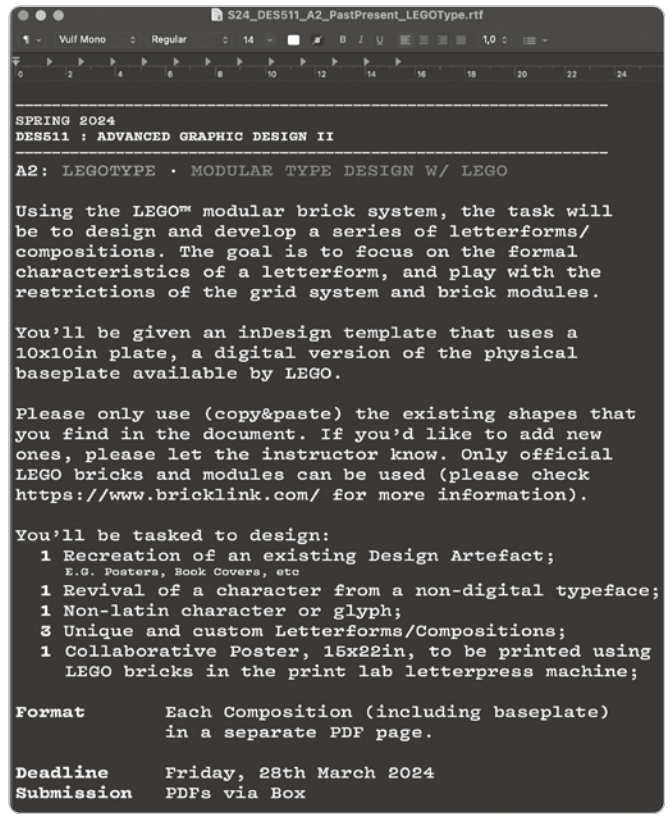

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DES511
LEGO TYPE
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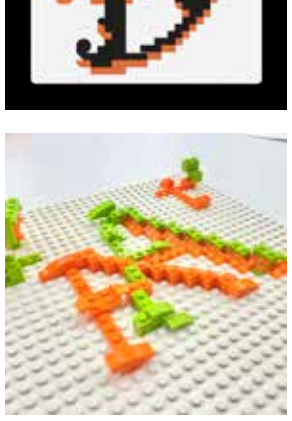

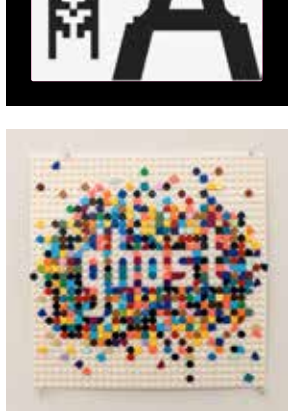

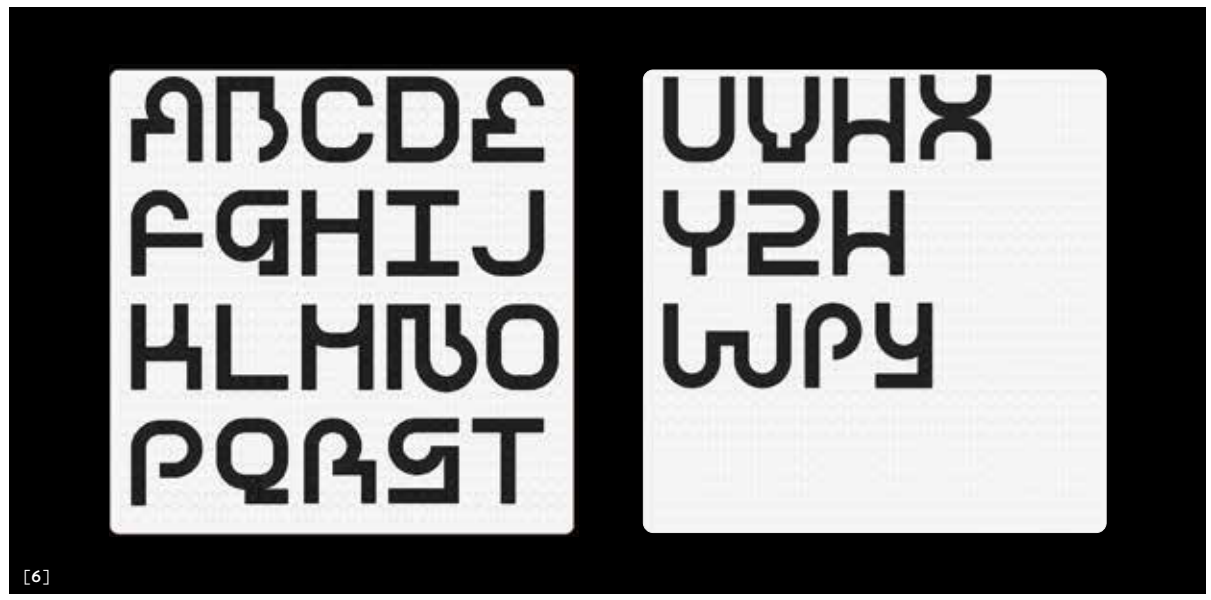
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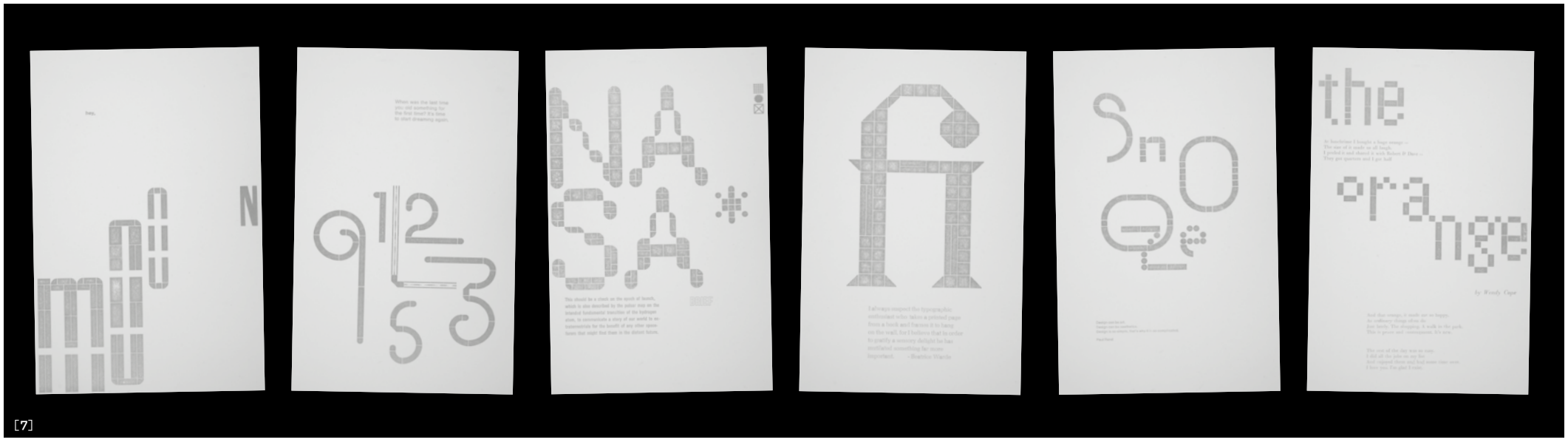
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The night is like a fried egg.
The daytime comes after you flip it
I like it when the sunny side is up
Fried daytime, bright egg, flip daylight
It's that miracle happening again.
I can smell it.
Can you?
You know the sun, rising and falling
Wait , are we still talking about breakfast?
Rising breakfast, talking sun, still second.
Command-Z.
No no no!!
Another egg cracks.
The morning sun is in my pupils
"Today is different," I say to myself.
Egg pupils, command cracks, tight me
Oh, shit. My eggs are burnt.
I'll give you a call tomorrow.
[9]


[10]


[11]

As a faculty member at an R1 research university, it is important for us to share the outcomes of our classes and research with our peers. In the summer of 2023, I presented at the Educational Forum of TypeCon, an international design conference hosted in Portland, Oregon, USA. In this educational forum, I shared the outcomes of the LEGO® assignment and the ideas behind this project.

Many attendees were interested in this methodology and wanted to try it out themselves. I was happy to share the work I had been developing, and encouraged them to pursue their own experiments. While preparing the presentation, I designed some letterforms myself to illustrate the findings from both my own research and my students' work. I imagined these initial letters would lead toward the development of a full alphabet, but at TypeCon, these conversations showed me how my peers could share in this effort to bring more diversity in approach and experimentation. It was at this conference that the first idea for this collective alphabet came about, and some of the initial participants for this project were found.

After returning to Chicago, I kept refining the idea, but I realized I would still need additional support both from my institution and from the international design community. I kept applying with this project to other conferences and design awards in the hope to gain the interest and support of fellow designers and institutions. Over the years that followed, the idea generated enough interest to arrive at a list of designers who would be part of this collective. The goal was never to close the project to a particular group of people, but rather, I wanted to bring about a sample of what it would be like to design letterforms using this methodology, but from different vantage points and through the hands of designers across the world.

In 2024, I was honored to present this work at ATypI, a conference that took place in Brisbane, Australia, where I had expanded my own research by introducing code and algorithmic thinking into the design process of LEGO® and letterforms. Being able to physically move across the world and continents expanded the range of people and backgrounds that this collective alphabet could include. Many of the conversations we had post-conference—in informal gatherings and studio visits—proved to be an amazing source of knowledge and inspiration for this project. At these conferences, resources for letterform making were shared: from digital templates that simulate the LEGO® brick system for prototyping, to analogue resources which required the purchase of bricks, specialty tools, and other materials needed to make this happen.

True encouragement came through the amount of people, from young students to established professionals, who showed an interest in experimenting with this system and graciously shared their knowledge and enthusiasm with like-minded peers.

In short, the validation through academic conferences became an important incentive. It allowed me to demonstrate this method was not just a superficial or trendy design-making activity, but a serious project based in deep respect for the design profession that honors a long tradition of type design and letterform development.


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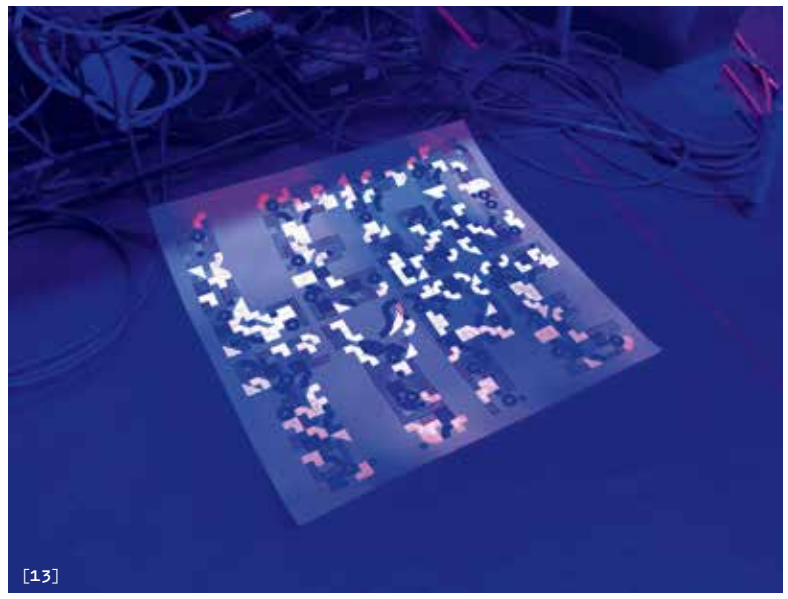
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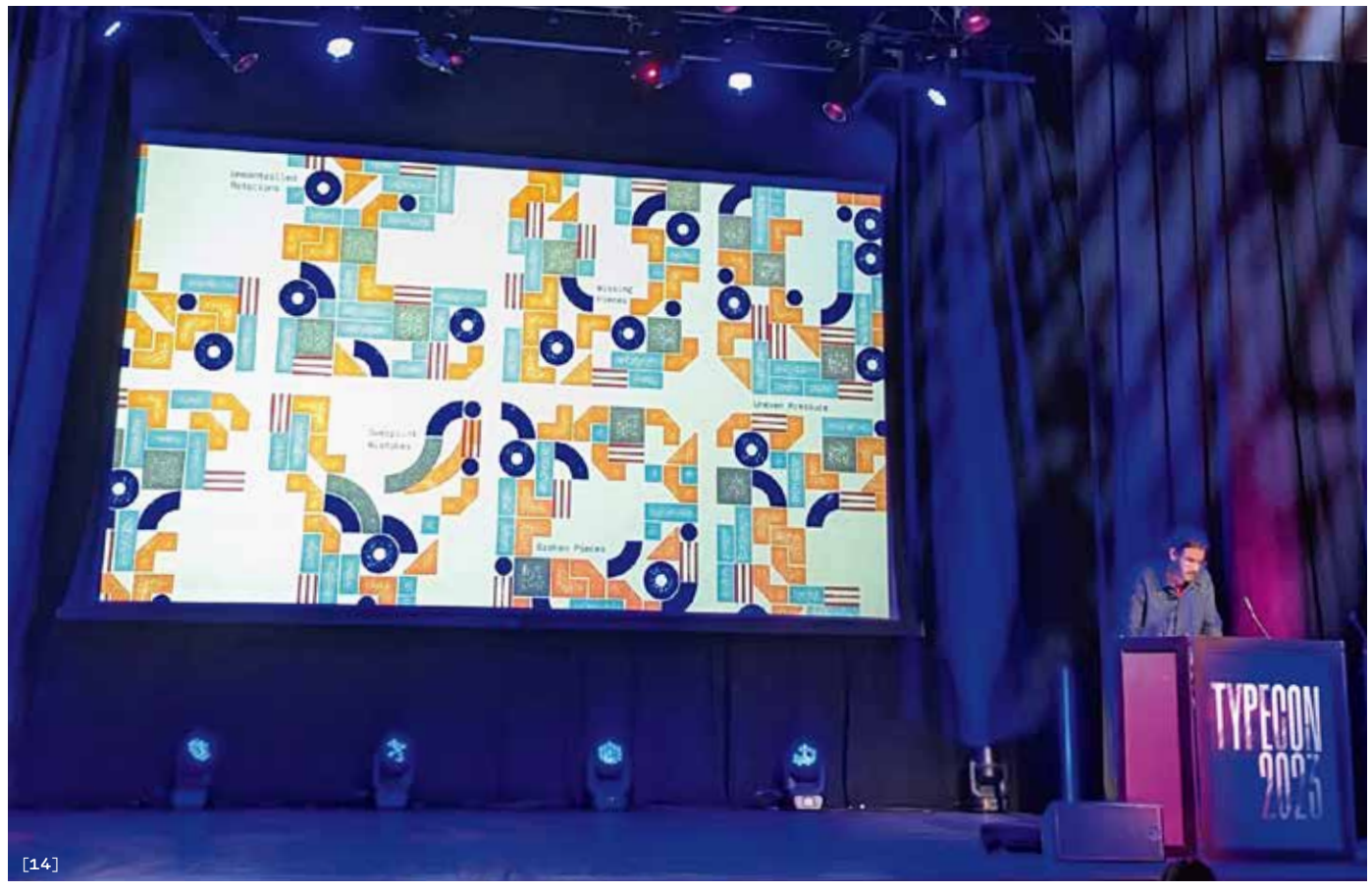

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THU, APRIL 18, 2024, 10:00 – 10:30 BCEC P9-11 THEATER

LEGOType: Letterforms, Letterpress, and Coding

Pedro Neves

This presentation will focus on the research developed at the University of Illinois Chicago—School of Design, through a series of exercises where students and faculty were tasked with creating modular letterforms using Lego bricks, and then using the letterpress to print their designs. When thinking about the importance of the letterpress in the development of Typography as a discipline, the question arose: how can one preserve the knowledge and heritage that comes from it but continue to develop experiments using a more contemporary, accessible and exciting approach?

Using the letterpress added an extra layer of complexity to the exercise, as one had to consider how their designs would translate into the physical printed form. The need to translate their hand-made designs into a digital template, a guide that would help typeset the bricks into the mirrored baseplate. Or the development and use small scripts of code to do color separation (in this case, brick separation) if the design was complex and was composed by a large amount of bricks. This methodology allowed participants to understand and develop their typographic sensitivity in a didactic and engaging way, while opening up space for experimentation and search for new forms. ■

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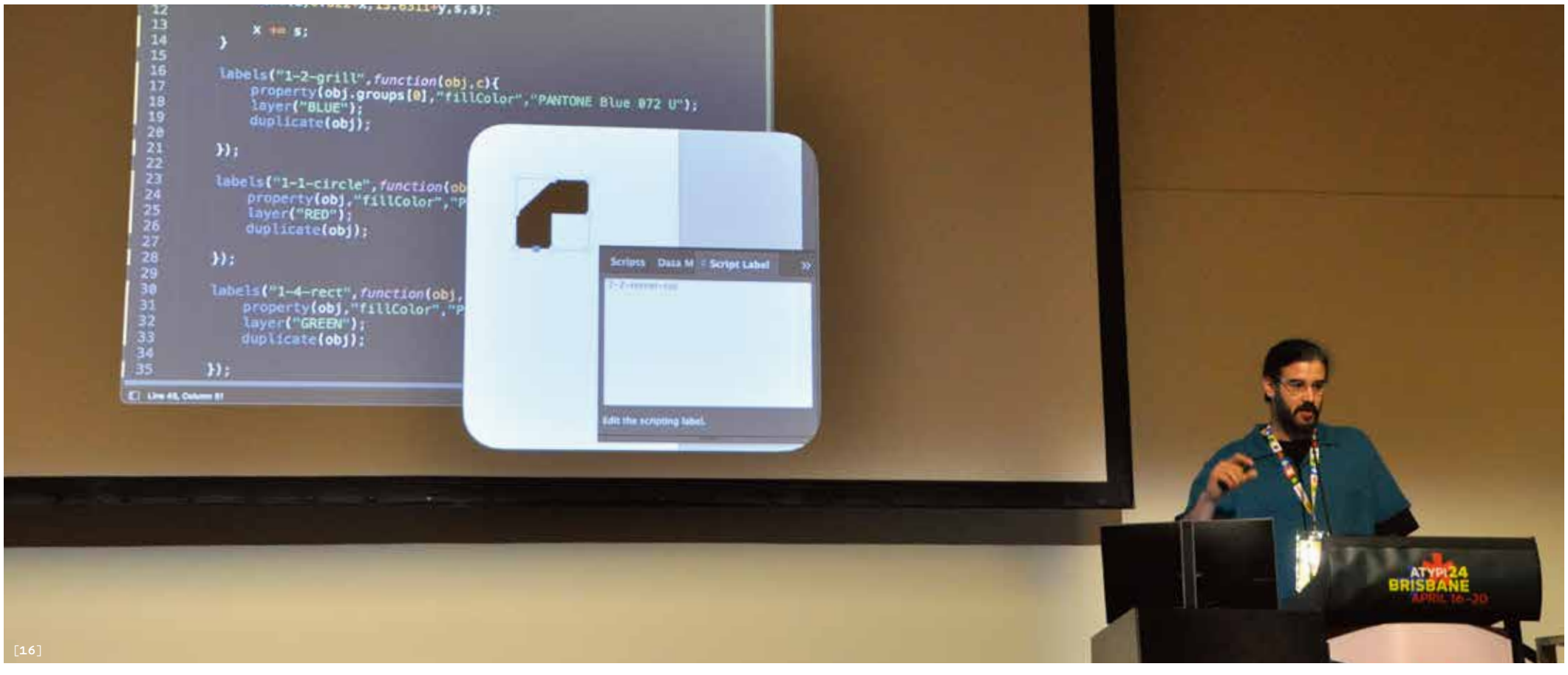

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In Summer 2024, I had the people needed to design and produce the alphabet, but no funds to guarantee its execution. Luckily, the University of Illinois Chicago's Award for Creative Activity was opening for applications to fund a number of research projects up to $20,000. Knowing that this particular idea had already gained recognition through presentations at conferences and other design awards, I decided to apply for financial funding to make this project come to fruition.

I had already been granted access to most of the resources needed at the School of Design—including space, storage, and a letterpress—but funding was still required for supplies such as paper, ink, and LEGO® bricks. I also needed to pay for labor, beyond my own, by hiring letterpress specialists, Amira Hegazy and Dafi Kühne, to help with the production of the alphabet and the poster for a future exhibition, respectively. The project required additional funding for distribution and a couple of research trips to solidify resources and get feedback from people who could potentially contribute.

I'm very thankful and fortunate to have won the award in 2024, which meant production could begin. This led to a news piece about how an assignment, developed in the context of a classroom, was expanded to a collective international project. Watch the interview and video on the UIC Today website or on YouTube via https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QqqD8GKvtlQ

In the video, you will hear about the idea and some of the main takeaways and goals of this project, alongside a short demo of the printing process and an explanation of how we use LEGO® to print this alphabet. It is a privilege to have such a well-produced piece of media to explain the essence of this project in a minute.

To start, a simple intellectual property contract and project prompt were written to clearly explain relevant details. This guaranteed that I received authorization to distribute each contributor's work while crediting each individual for their design. Additionally, participants were offered the opportunity of receiving a physical LEGO® kit (a baseplate and a mix of individual bricks) so they could develop their designs and test ideas physically.

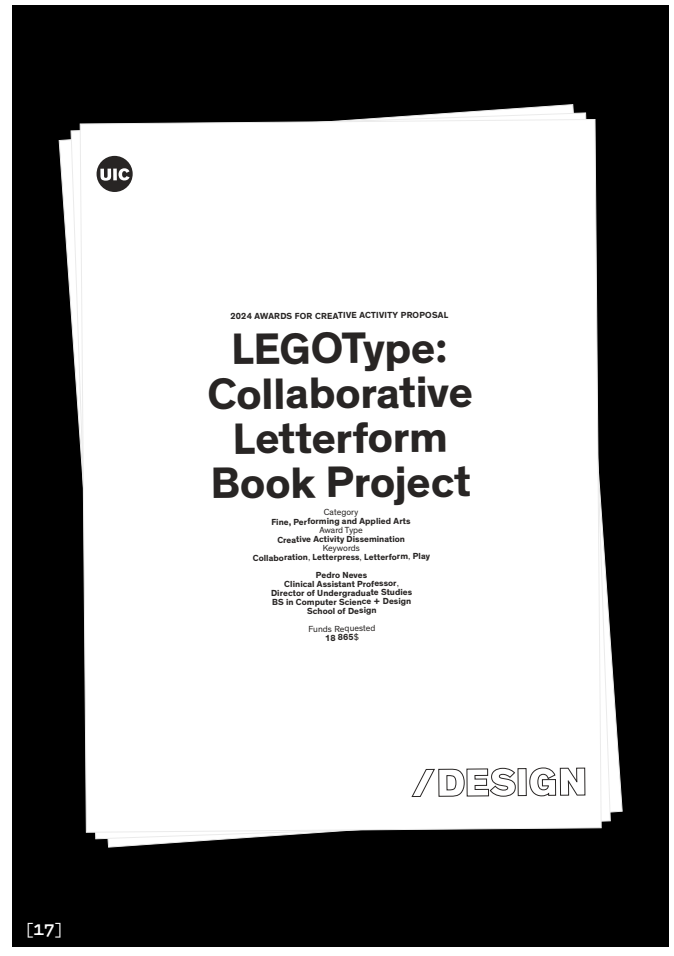
In a conversation with Amira Hegazy — a letterpress specialist and publisher of this alphabet — we decided it would be important to limit and constrain this project to official LEGO® bricks. While there are many digital fabrication tools that could create new and unique pieces that would still work within this system, this restriction helped to maintain consistency across letterforms in the alphabet. Over time, LEGO® launched new bricks and shapes that could have been part of this alphabet or project, but we maintained the original parameters to guarantee consistency across contributions.

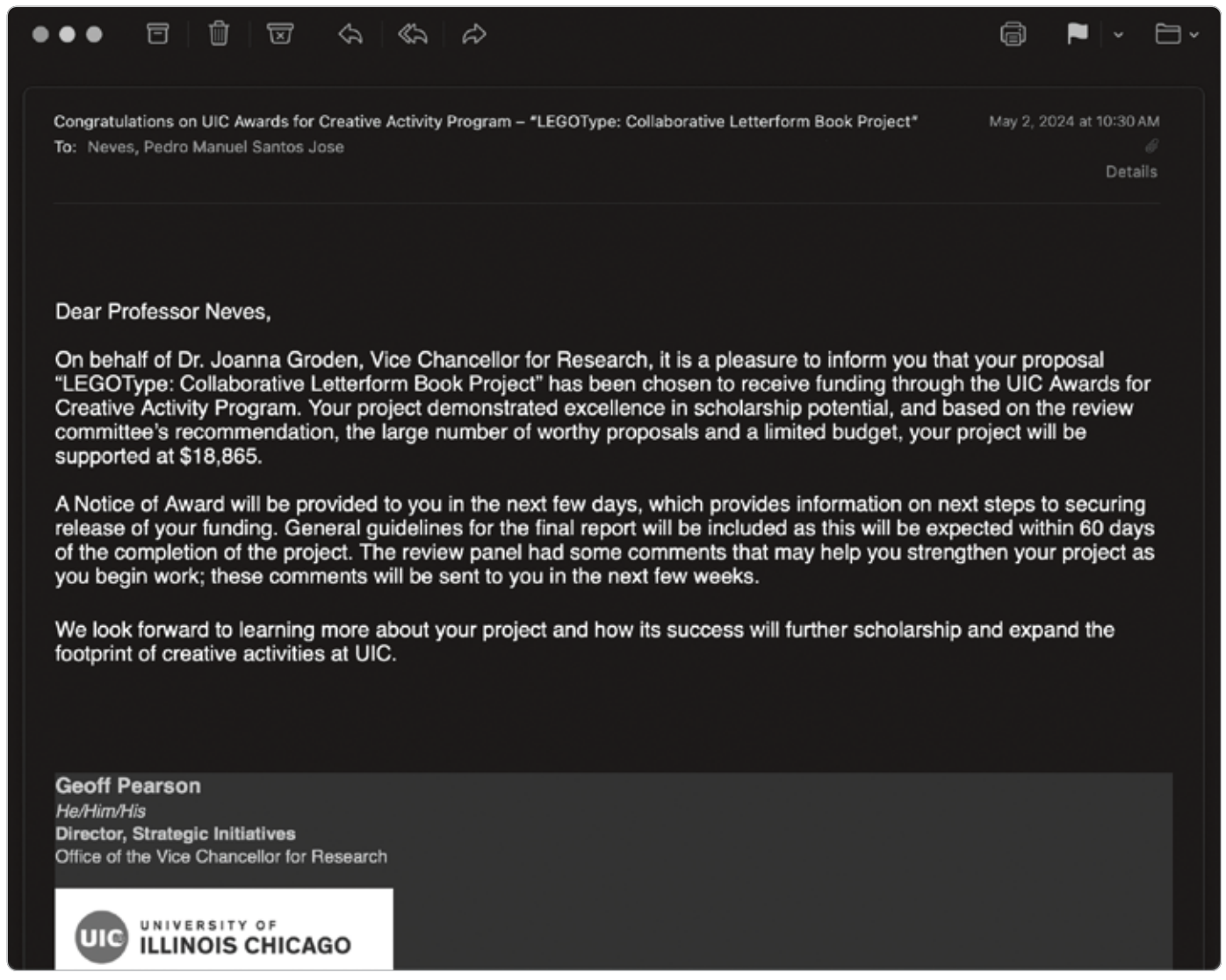
An aspect that became very important to this project was the use of color. Because we knew that each color would be inked and layered separately, we wanted to decide on a group of colors that would allow for play with overprinting and combination. We settled on a five-color palette, loosely inspired by CMYK. In this case, using the Pantone color system, we used an aqua (310U) as the cyan; a red (032U) to replace the magenta; a rich yellow (136U), and a purple (226U) as the darkest color. After creating the initial four color palette, we decided to add a green (354U) to give us two possible shades of green: one that is a process color (made from the overprinting of aqua and yellow), and a spot color green. The ability to generate two different tones of the same color with two distinct color theory processes created an interesting opportunity for designers.

Due to production and time constraints, we decided that we would only allow designers to use up to three layers: they could either mix and match different colors or use multiple layers of the same color.

The designers returned completed digital templates with their final designs, to be set up physically at UIC and printed on our Vandercook Universal I press; a time consuming process that was carried out across the next eight months.

In the pages that follow, you will find the complete alphabet, the list of participants, and the stories behind their letterforms, supported by some production details and collective + collaborative experiences. One of the most rewarding parts of the co-creation experience was to engage with each designer's contribution and to read their reasoning behind each letterform.




Congratulations on UIC Awards for Creative Activity Program – "LEGOType: Collaborative Letterform Book Project" May 2, 2024 at 10:30 AM

To: Neves, Pedro Manuel Santos Jose Details

Dear Professor Neves,

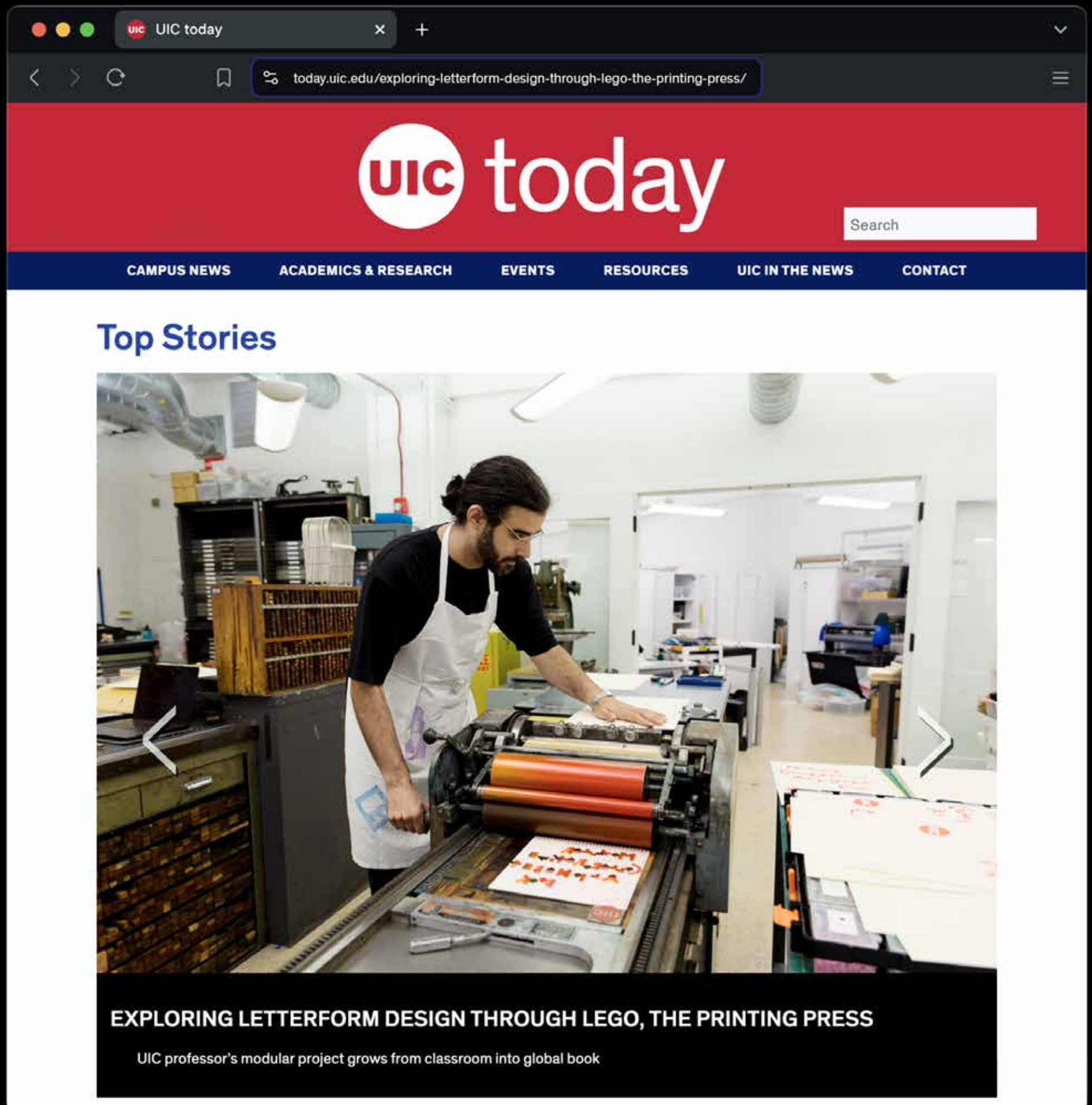
On behalf of Dr. Joanna Groden, Vice Chancellor for Research, it is a pleasure to inform you that your proposal "LEGOType: Collaborative Letterform Book Project" has been chosen to receive funding through the UIC Awards for Creative Activity Program. Your project demonstrated excellence in scholarship potential, and based on the review committee's recommendation, the large number of worthy proposals and a limited budget, your project will be supported at $18,865.

A Notice of Award will be provided to you in the next few days, which provides information on next steps to securing release of your funding. General guidelines for the final report will be included as this will be expected within 60 days of the completion of the project. The review panel had some comments that may help you strengthen your project as you begin work; these comments will be sent to you in the next few weeks.

We look forward to learning more about your project and how its success will further scholarship and expand the footprint of creative activities at UIC.

Geoff Pearson
He/Him/His
Director, Strategic Initiatives
Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research

UIC UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS CHICAGO


UIC today
today.uic.edu/exploring-letterform-design-through-lego-the-printing-press/
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EXPLORING LETTERFORM DESIGN THROUGH LEGO, THE PRINTING PRESS
UIC professor's modular project grows from classroom into global book

Modular Collaborative Alphabet Book

Dear **DESIGNER**,
thank you for considering joining this project.

The prompt is simple: **design the letterform that was assigned to you using the LEGO modular brick system**.

Letterform:

There are multiple ways to go about this task.

After reading this handout and agreeing to participate in this project, you'll be able to request a kit comprised of a 10×10in lego baseplate and a bag with an assortment of individual bricks. You can use these to sketch out ideas and manually compose your letterform.

If you run out of physical bricks, and/or want to explore different colors and compositions, you might want to consider to switch to the digital version of this prompt. As much as I would love to provide infinite bricks and/or color combinations, that is just not feasible for the scale of this project.

I've created an inDesign template to match the baseplate size and all the bricks available. Please duplicate each page and/or copy&paste the existing bricks. Do not create your own bricks, as each brick as a script label attached to it that will be necessary in the future.

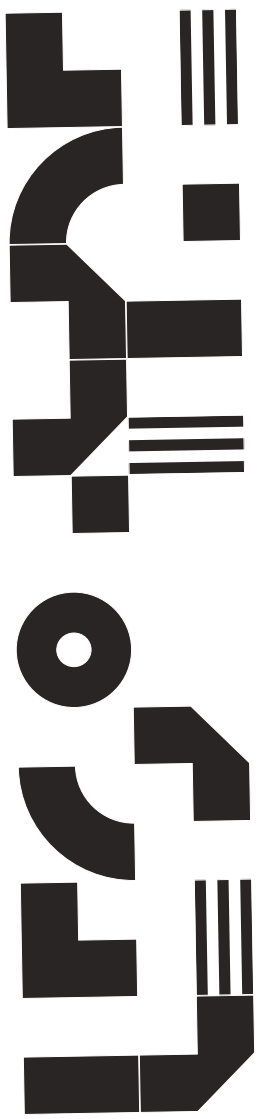
I'll kindly ask you to, after you finish designing your letterform, to convert it into the digital format with the template provided, so it can be used in making of a book with all the letterforms designed as part of this collaborative exercise. For this, it will be crucial to have a digital version of the design for pre-press and production.

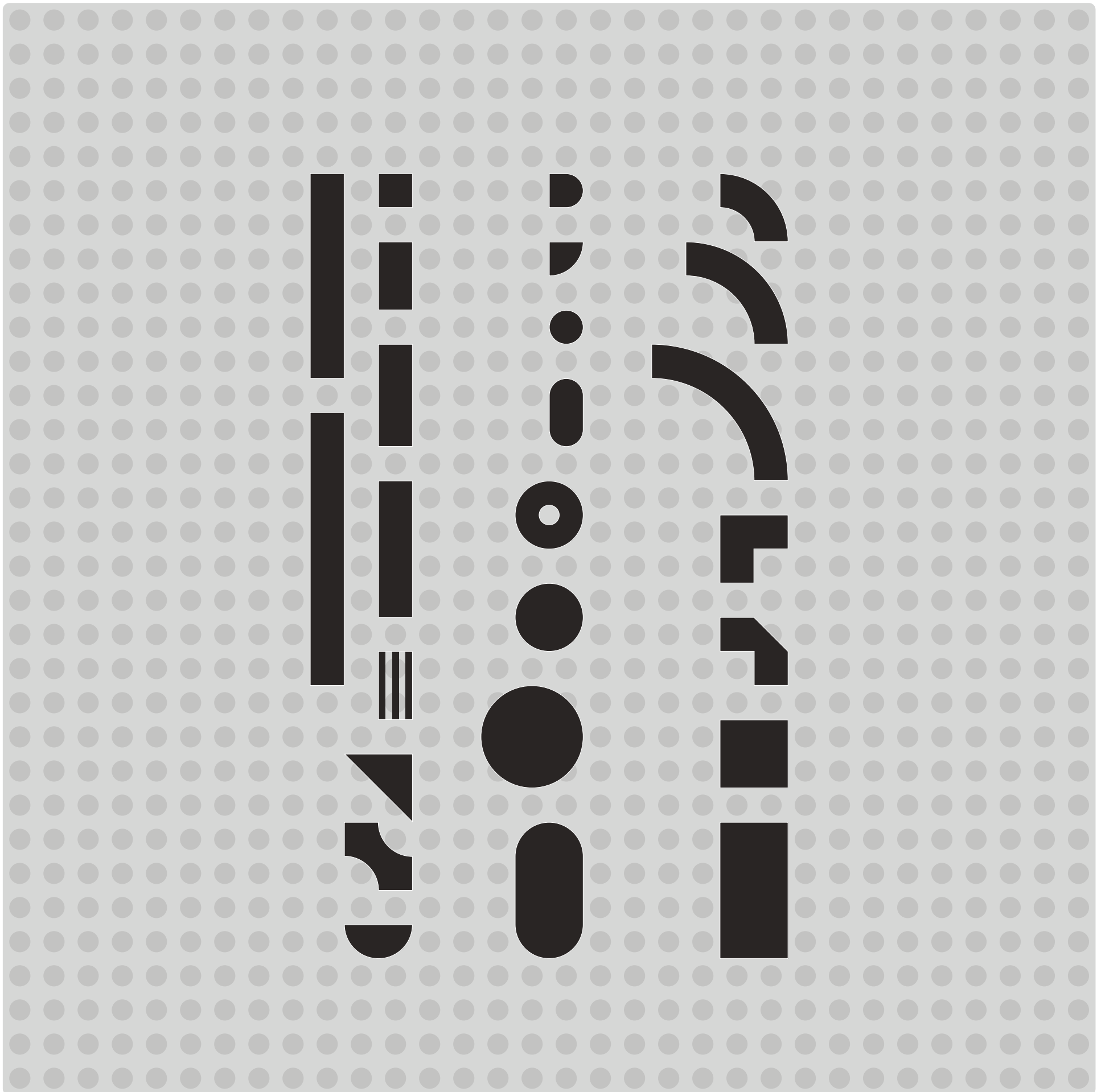
The final letterform will be printed using a **Vandercook Letterpress machine**, in a **12×12in** page, with **up to three** different colors, so overprint is a possibility. You can simulate the overprint using the layers from the digital template. Final colors will be decided at a later date.

You can download the template via the QR code, or using the following link: **pedroneves.info/lego-kit**

Once finished, please send a picture of your physical letterform and/or the inDesign template with your design via e-mail to: **pneves2@uic.edu**.

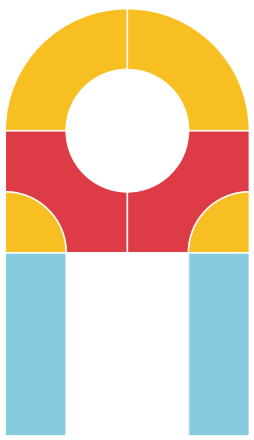
Thank you for your time and I look forward to see your letters come to life.



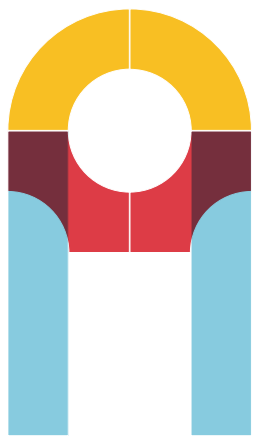


Examples using multiple layers

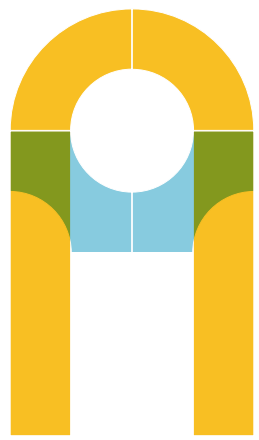
3 colors
no overprint
3 layers



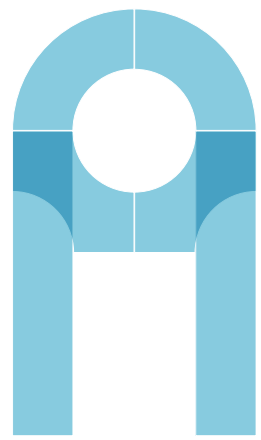
3 colors
overprint
3 layers



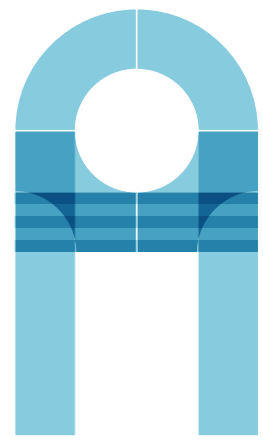
2 colors
overprint
2 layers



1 color
overprint
2 layers



1 color
overprint
3 layers



Each letterform will be printed with up to three layers.
Here are some examples of possible color/printing combinations.

You can choose from the following five colors*:

Aqua
Pantone
310 U

Yellow
Pantone
136 U

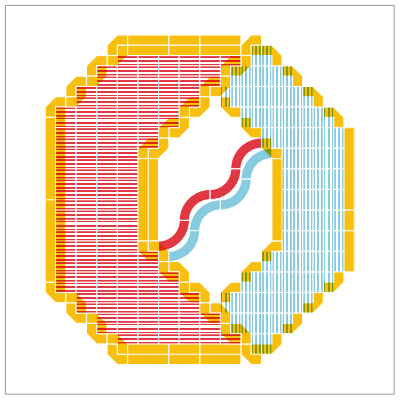
Red
Pantone
032 U

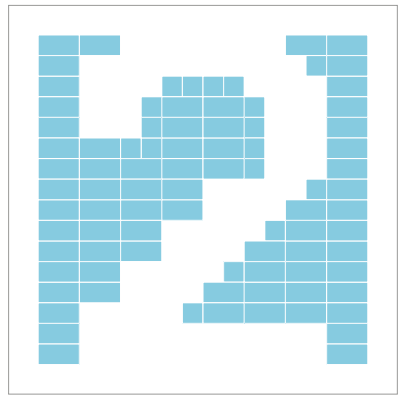
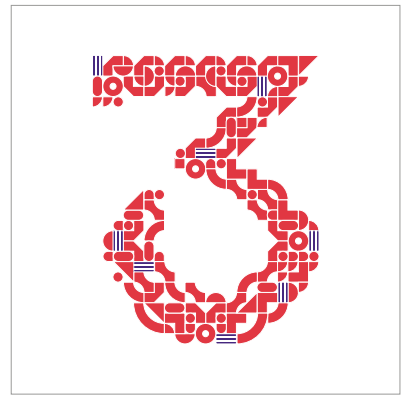
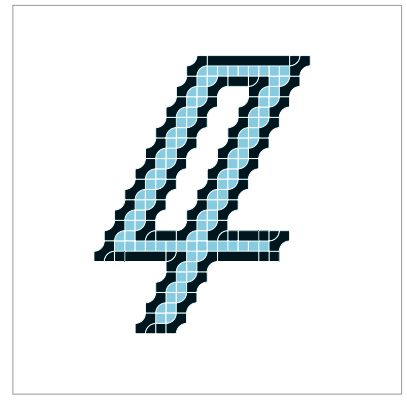
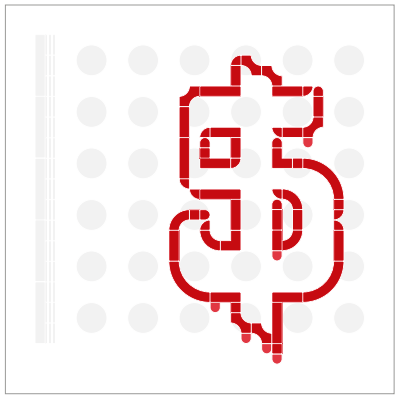
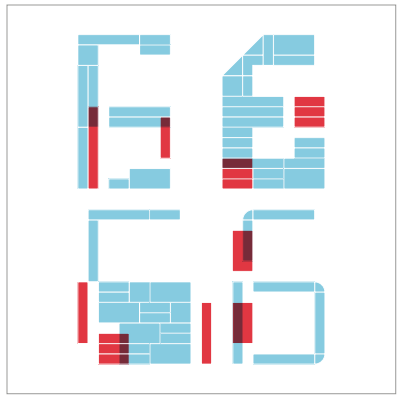
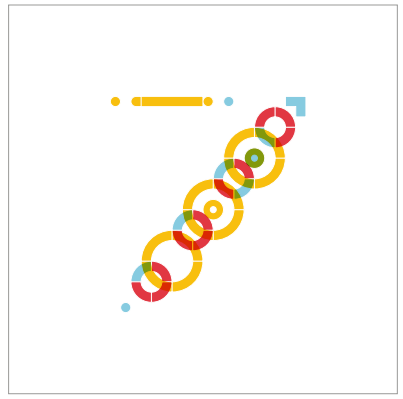
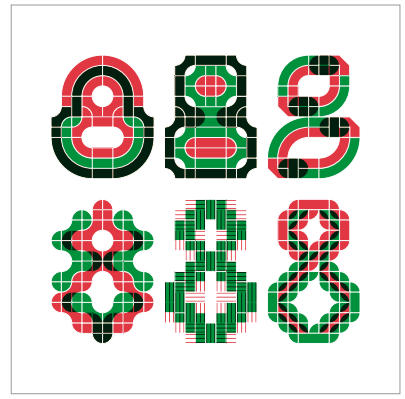
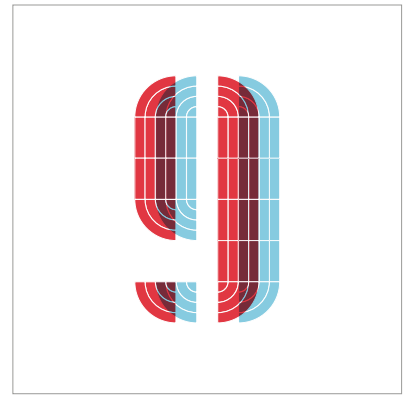
Purple
Pantone
226 U

Green
Pantone
354 U

* Final PMS values will vary depending on availability and final letterform designs.

SUBMISSIONS & PARTICIPANTS



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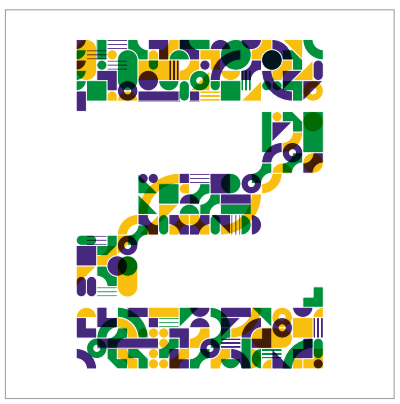
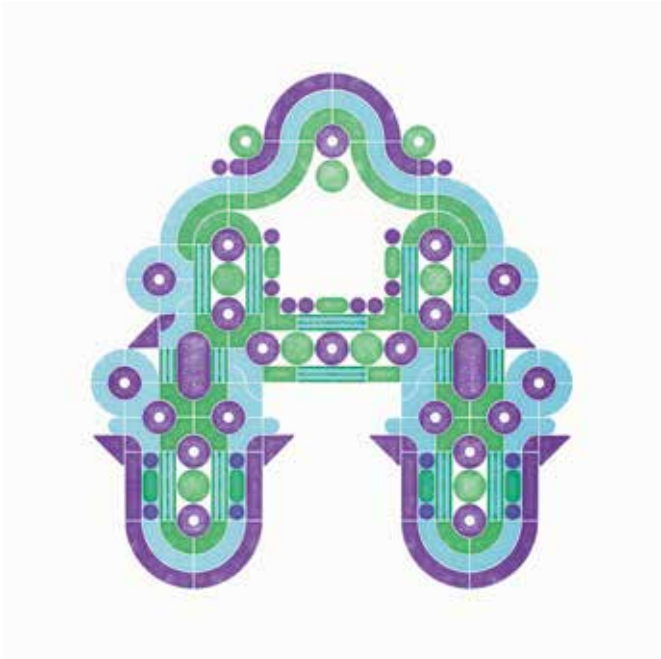
#	Example	NAME	X	X	X	X	MM / YYYY	
A	Hala Al-Ani	UAE	X	X	X	X	08 / 2024	✅
B	Philip Burton	USA	X	X	X	X	07 / 2024	✅
C	Nuno Coelho	POR	X	X	X	X	11 / 2024	✅
D	Ted Davis	USA	X	X	X	X	11 / 2024	✅
E	Tanner Woodford (DMoC)	USA	X	X	X	X	03 / 2025	✅
F	Otto + Fabian Harb	CH	X	X	X	X	09 / 2024	✅
G	João Guedes	POR	X	X	X	X	12 / 2024	✅
H	Dina Benbrahim	MOR	X	X	X	X	05 / 2024	✅
I	Paul Hardman	UK	X	X	X	X	11 / 2024	✅
J	Kelsey Elder	USA	X	X	X	X	08 / 2024	✅
K	Kate Wolff	CH	X	X	X	X	07 / 2024	✅
L	Marcia Lausen	USA	X	X	X	X	03 / 2024	✅
M	Malpa	USA	X	X	X	X	03 / 2025	✅
N	Naz + Nabil Nasr	UAE	X	X	X	X	09 / 2024	✅
O	Wayne Thompson	AUS	X	X	X	X	09 / 2024	✅
P	Simon Charwey	GHA	X	X	X	X	04 / 2025	✅
Q	Fabiola Mejía	CRI	X	X	X	X	08 / 2024	✅
R	Eunice Chiong	SGP	X	X	X	X	03 / 2025	✅
S	Grace Spee	USA	X	X	X	X	12 / 2024	✅
T	Layne Thue-Bludworth	USA	X	X	X	X	12 / 2024	✅
U	Promphan Suksumek	THA	X	X	X	X	08 / 2024	✅
V	Eric Von Haynes	USA	X	X	X	X	12 / 2024	✅
W	Jen Wandro	USA	X	X	X	X	12 / 2024	✅
X	UIC Print Lab (D + M)	USA	X	X	X	X	03 / 2025	✅
Y	Henrique Nardi	BRA	X	X	X	X	08 / 2024	✅
Z	Andrea Zaccuri	ITA	X	X	X	X	01 / 2025	✅

LETTER	NAME	COUNTRY	SENT	SIGNED	COMPLETE	BIO + QUOTE	DEADLINE	
#	Example		X	X	X	X	MM / YYYY	
0	Provisional Press	USA	X	X	X	X	03 / 2024	✅
1	Raven Mo	USA	X	X	X	X	10 / 2024	✅
2	Mario Rizzotti	ITA	X	X	X	X	08 / 2024	✅
3	Leo Vicenti	CAN	X	X	X	X	07 / 2024	✅
4	Austin Watson	USA	X	X	X	X	07 / 2024	✅
5	Dakota Brown	USA	X	X	X	X	05 / 2025	✅
6	Sina Niemeier	GER	X	X	X	X	01 / 2025	✅
7	Robert Zolna	USA	X	X	X	X	05 / 2025	✅
8	Josh Cook	USA	X	X	X	X	03 / 2024	✅
9	Craig Ward	UK	X	X	X	X	03 / 2025	✅



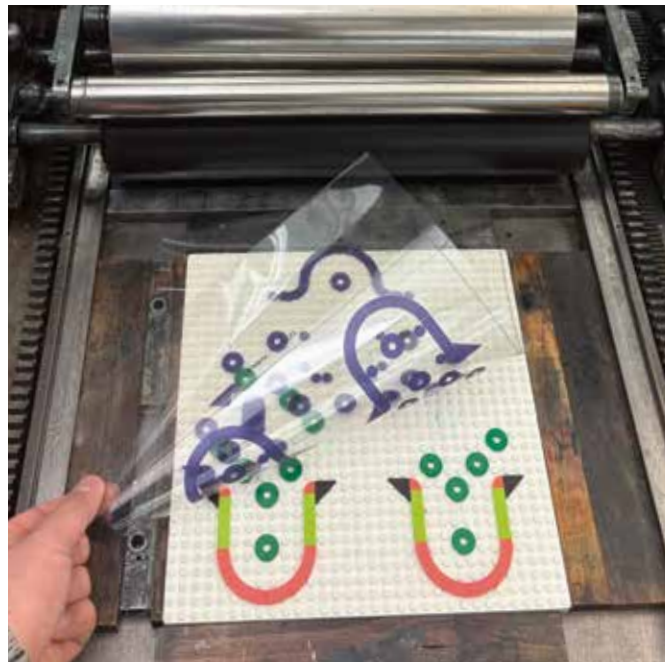
PARTICIPANTS		
N AMERICA - 18	**AFRICA - 2**	**EUROPE - 9**
USA - 17	MOR - 1	POR - 2
CAN - 1	GHA - 1	CH - 2
C + S AMERICA - 2	**ASIA - 4**	GER - 1
BRA - 1	UAE - 2	ITA - 2
CRI - 1	SGP - 1	UK - 2
OCEANIA - 1	THA - 1	
AUS - 1		

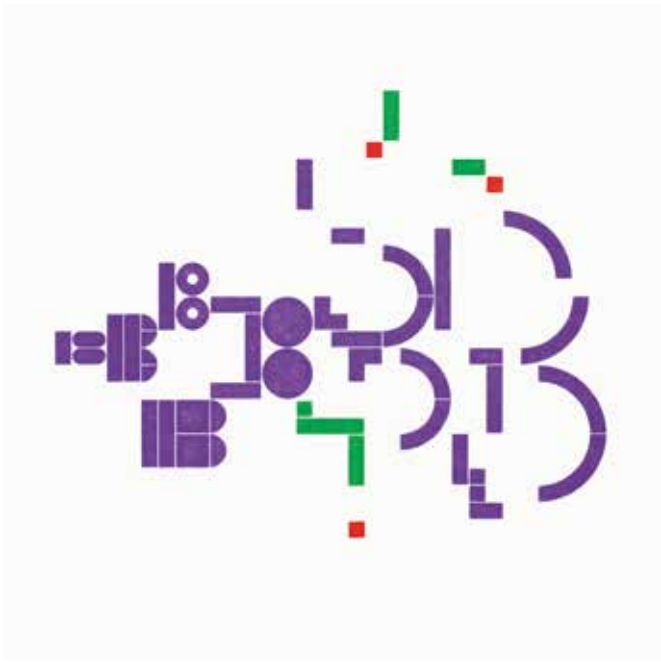


[**A**]

The letterform combines a wide range of modules to create a dynamic and engaging visual presence. By integrating both rounded and straight-edge shapes, it achieves a balanced contrast that emphasizes the interplay between smooth curves and sharp lines. Meticulously constructed with a heavy overall weight, the letterform incorporates intricate details that add richness. Additionally, the symmetrical composition enhances its distinctive character and complexity.

Hala Al-Ani

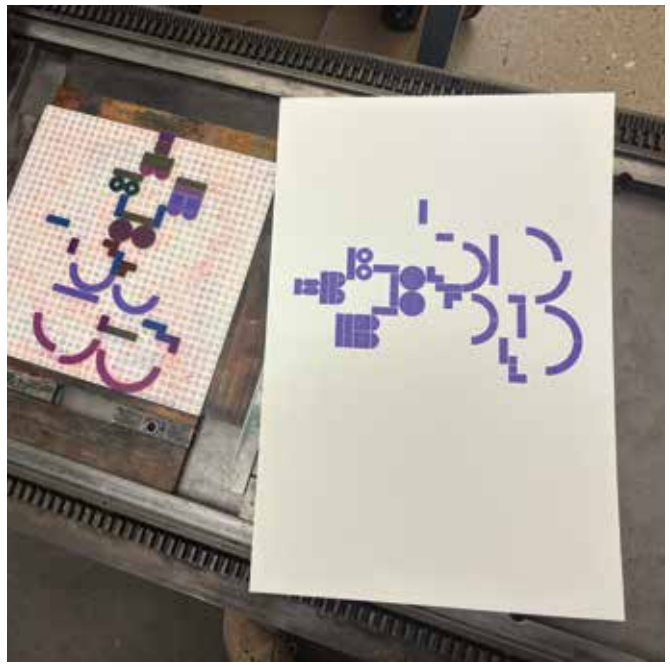


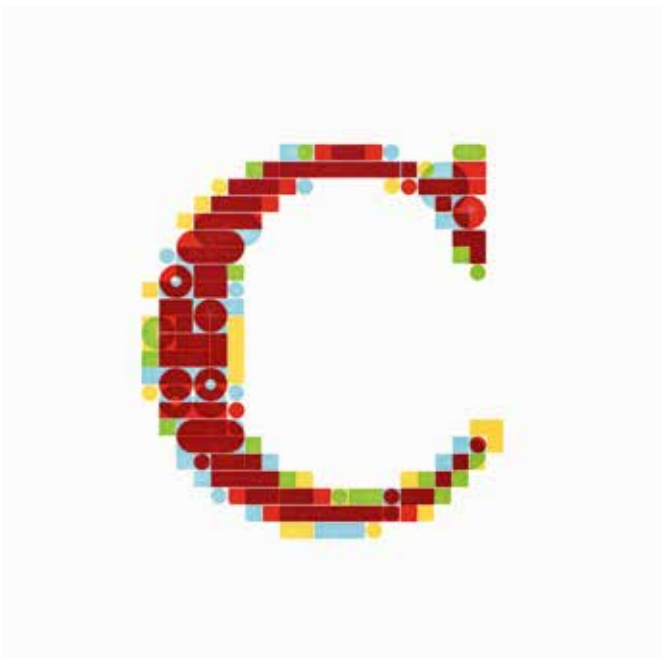


[**B**]

For his senior thesis, a former UIC student of mine created both a roman and italic serif font using LEGO®, so I was somewhat familiar with their potential. I also once assembled a LEGO® Farnsworth House kit. But Pedro's invitation to create a letter composition using LEGO® was a fun challenge. My approach was to first make letters using available shapes that then explode into a happy celebration.

Philip Burton

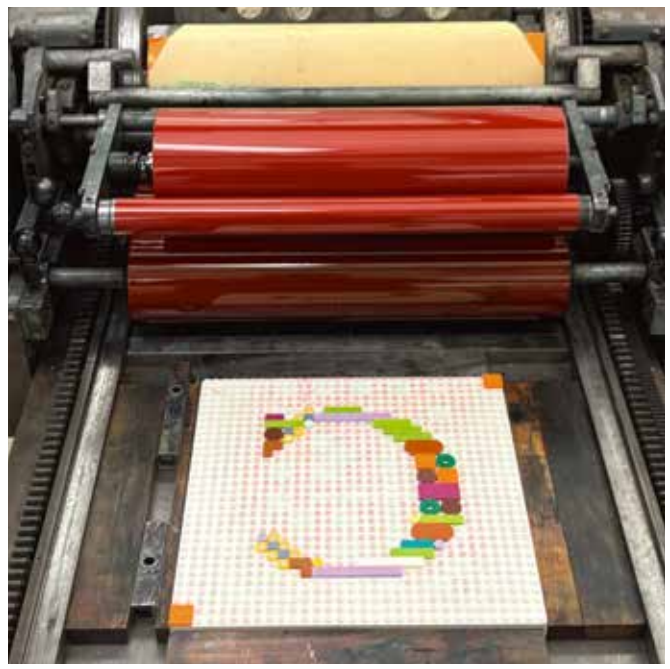


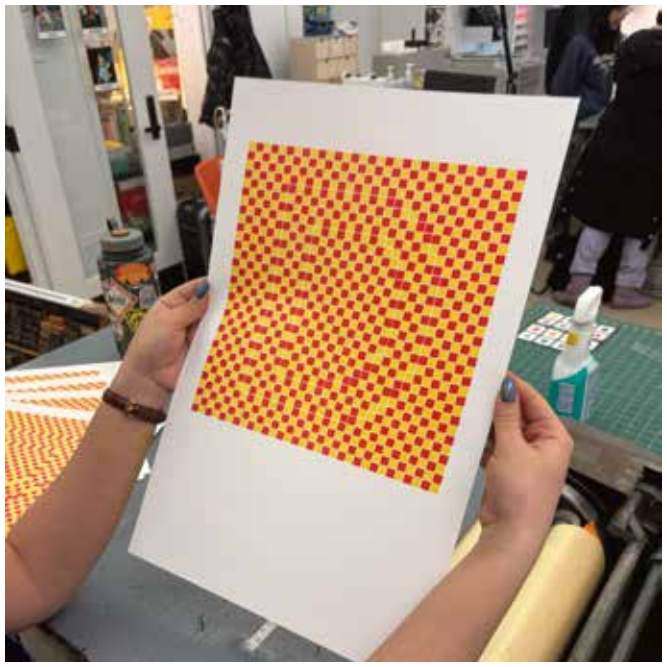


[**C**]

When I think of LEGO®, I immediately associate it with square-based modules, which remind me of pixels. For my letter "C", I selected a capital in Times New Roman – a font I'm not particularly fond of – as a way to counteract that feeling and challenge myself. In its pixelated form, I explored the concept of anti-aliasing, a technique commonly used when rendering text for screens. This method employs shades of gray to create the illusion of curved edges. In this composition, I experimented by substituting the half-tone shades with the three chosen colours (red, blue, and yellow) with the two additional ones (purple and green) generated through overprinting. However, at smaller sizes or when viewed up close, anti-aliased text can appear smudged. By using LEGO® pieces of varying shapes, I transformed this smudged effect into something more expressive and dynamic, particularly when observing the intricate details of the letter up close.

Nuno Coelho

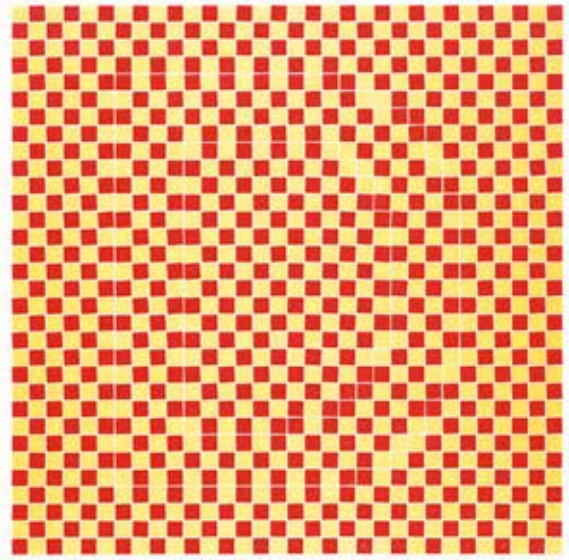


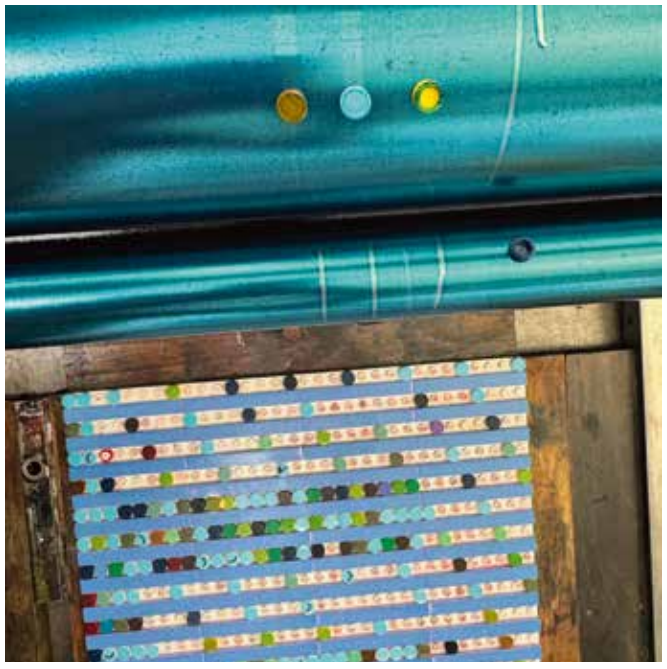


[D]

My approach for the letter ‘D’ began with creative-coding, aiming to design something that I wouldn’t have imagined when using the mouse. This process began with p5.js, live-coding via P5LIVE, creating two 32×32 pixel layers that matched the dimensions of the provided LEGO® base-plate. On the first layer, a single ‘D’ was drawn. On the second layer, a checkerboard pattern of alternating colors was given to each pixel, while at the same time reactiving if that pixel landed on the first layer’s ‘D’. An animated version helped explore the range of potential outputs, before returning back to the first result of just two colors, where the illusion was its strongest. The colorful 32×32 grid was then exported into a data format (JSON), which was programmatically applied to the provided InDesign template using basil.js to automatically place the LEGO® 1×1 blocks on the grid and set the correct swatch color.

Ted Davis

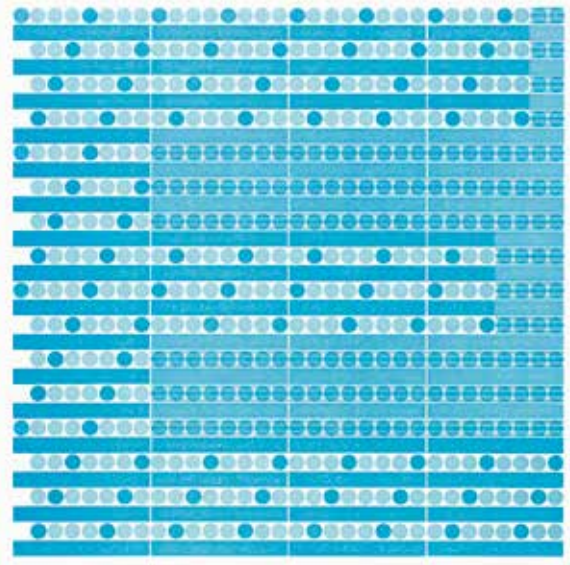




[E]

My submission for the letter ‘E’ was inspired by my daughter, Emi, and her wonderfully maximalist approach to life. I aimed to capture her boundless creativity within a few deliberate constraints, letting her spirit shine through.

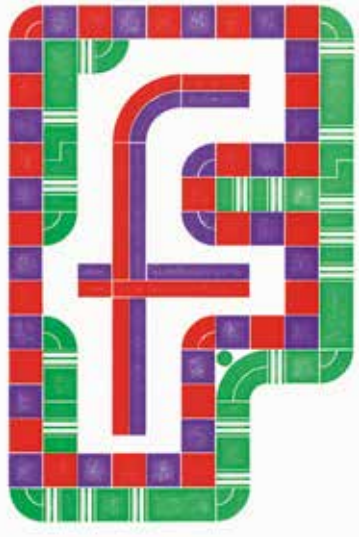
Tanner Woodford

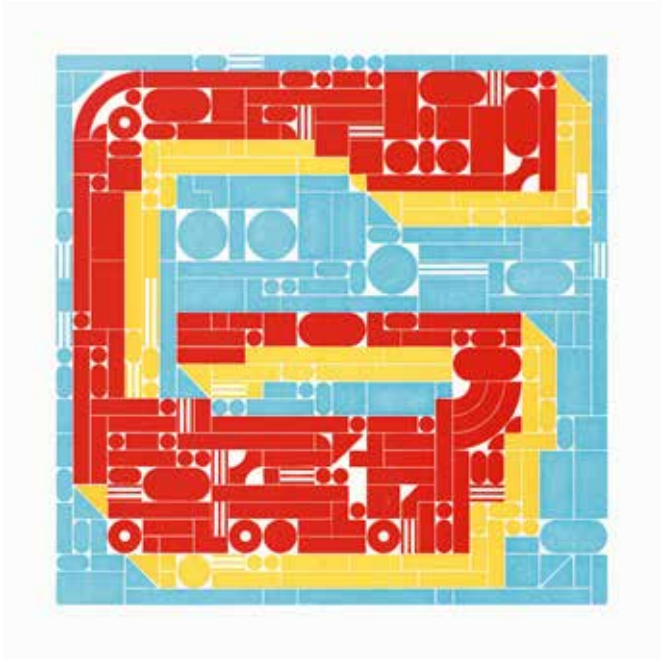


[F]

“f in F”. Son and dad collaborating on the design, the idea of a “double letter” wasn’t far to seek: Otto took the lead and started with the Lowercase “f” shape; Fabian (art directed by Otto) then modeled the Uppercase “F” around it. A slightly ornamented “shadow” was jointly composed around and within the two letters, to nicely fill out the whitespace and create a more spatial feeling.

Fabian Harb + Otto Valladares Paim

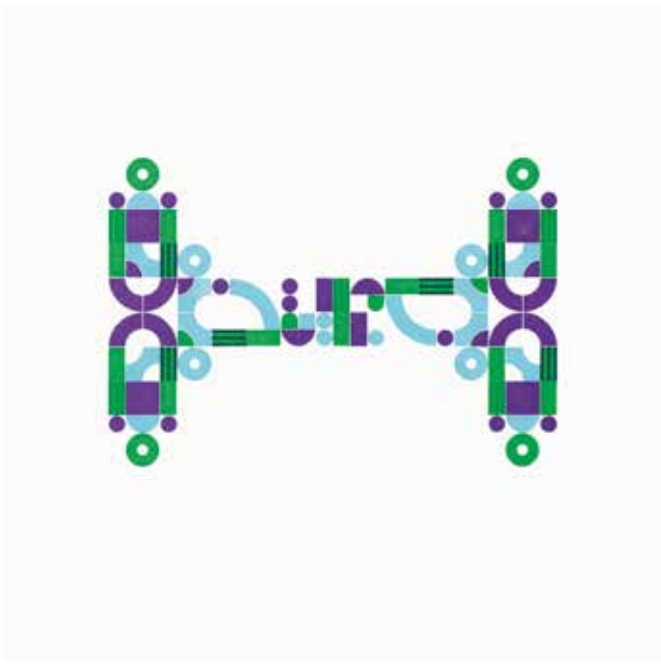




[G]

The design of the letter G began as a kind of game. An attempt to fill the grid, using the board as a framework, and to create depth and contrast with the three available colours. The result is a strange, arcade-like letter.

Studio Dobra (João Guedes)



[H]

Each LEGO® piece in the set reminded me of the small ceramic zellige (tiles) from Morocco. Each tile is handcrafted, cut, and arranged in complex geometrical patterns that require mathematical precision, intuition, design skills, and technique. One must wonder about the patience of the artisans who make entire room out of pieces as small as these.

For me, it was a meditative and playful exercise to engage in while remembering my roots.

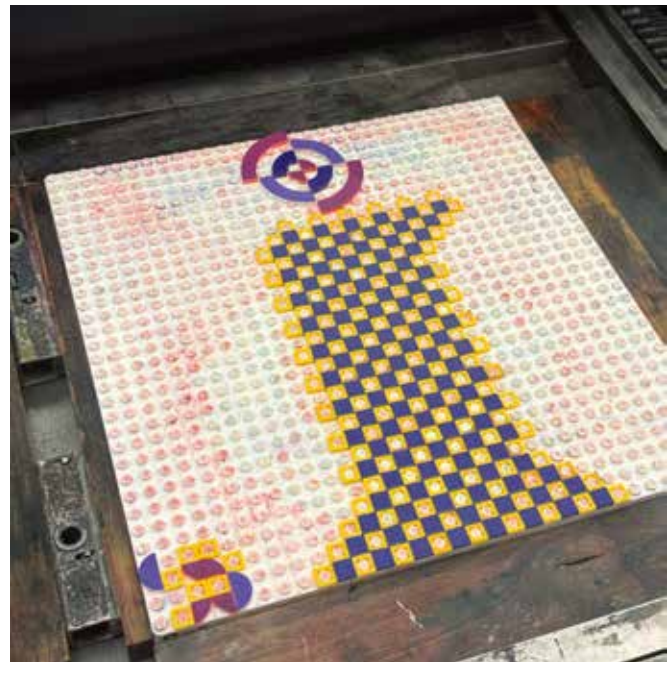
Dina Benbrahim

[I]

The origin of the letter ‘I’ may be in representations of an arm or a hand, as far back as Egyption hieroglyphics. My proposal intertwines a hand with a modern serif lower case ‘i’, suggesting perhaps, a ‘hamsa hand’, a symbol of protection and guidance.

Only a small selection of LEGO® shapes are used in the design, in order to test the possibilities of modularity within the limitations of the project.

Paul Hardman



[J]

This letterform reimagines the technical production of wood type through LEGO® bricks. It is inspired by William H. Page's Streamer type blocks. Page's types leveraged single-color printing, measured 8 to 14-lines in size, and were all created using a router to cut the forms, a process that resulted in quintessential design details and flare. Here, instead of a router causing formal traits, a small set of shapes were used to carve away positive and negative space to create the final letter.

Kelsey Elder

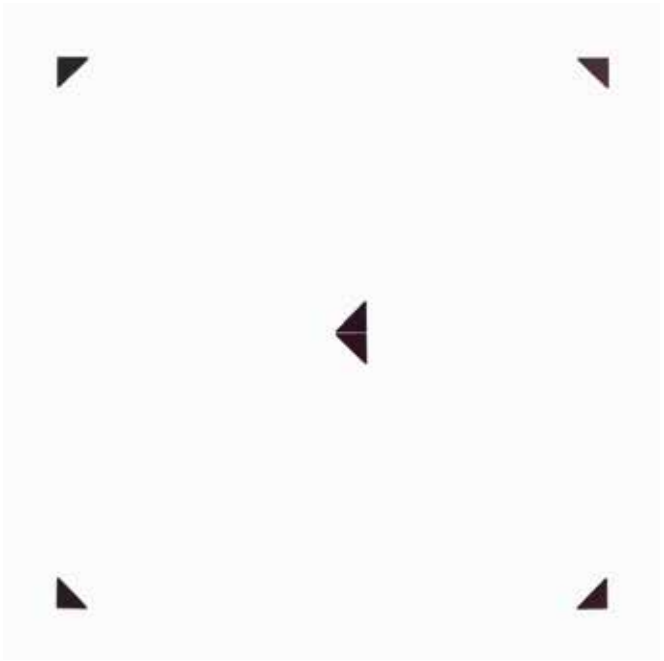
The Good-hearted «K»

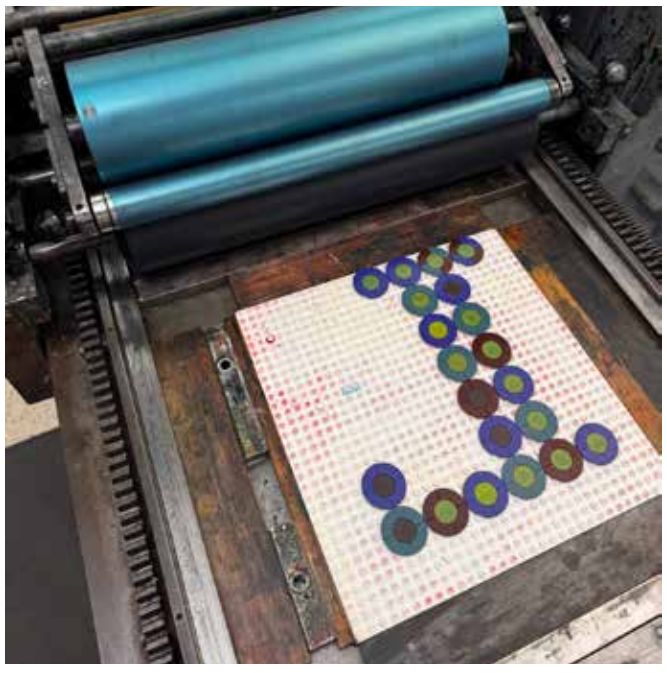
Kindred in sound to both C and Q, the good-hearted K
has to fight for its market share of English spelling.
Generally our letters are too few: We could use more to
represent sounds like «sh», «th», or the schwa vowel
(as in «*mentəl*»). Yet we extravagantly allocate three letters for
one sound, the unvoiced velar «K».
The big loser in the three-way turf war is Q, nearly
the least used letter in English print. K fares badly too, standing
at about number 22 or 21 in frequency of
use, fourth or fifth to last.
Today C and K rule different sectors of the map of Europe. The
«K languages», favoring K over C in word spellings,
lie mainly in the north and east: They include the Germanic and
some of the Slavic tongues, also Finnish and Hungarian. The
province of C lies generally farther south: Spanish, Portuguese,
French, Italian, and in
the east, Romanian. Among a handful of French K-words,
the most mainstream one is *képi*, enoting the round,
flat-topped, visored French military and police cap.
The word comes from Swiss German «cap»; even the Swiss
German quotation marks are a sign of K's abstract existence, not
to mention that the letter itself now
thrives in its new global context.

[K]

←

Katharine Wolff

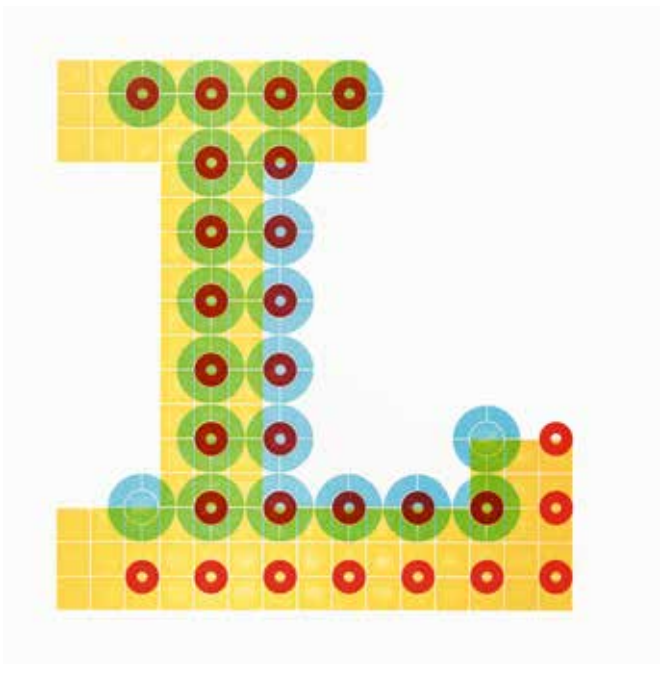




[L]

Knowing that the book design would include three colors, my composition involves three overlapping letterforms that become more interesting in combination. Each "L" is formed by a single tile shape, printed in a single color, and able to stand on its own formal merit. The overall effect changes greatly with the color values and overlap sequence employed—with the final result to be determined by the author.

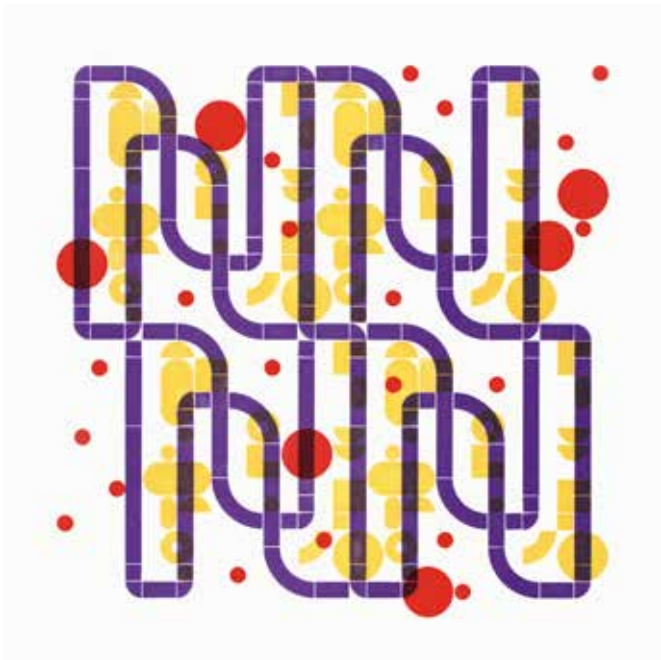
Marcia Lausen



[M]

This letterform was designed by sculptor Karin Malpeso. M is short for Malpa, and Malpa is short for Malpeso: a family of six creatives working together across building, art, education, visual communication, and sound design. The design of the letterform is inspired by the diverse range of emotions and experiences that come with being part of a tightly knit, intergenerational creative family. Its vibrant, chaotic, and intricate geometry reflects the layered, ever-evolving nature of family dynamics—scattered but rooted, messy but connected.

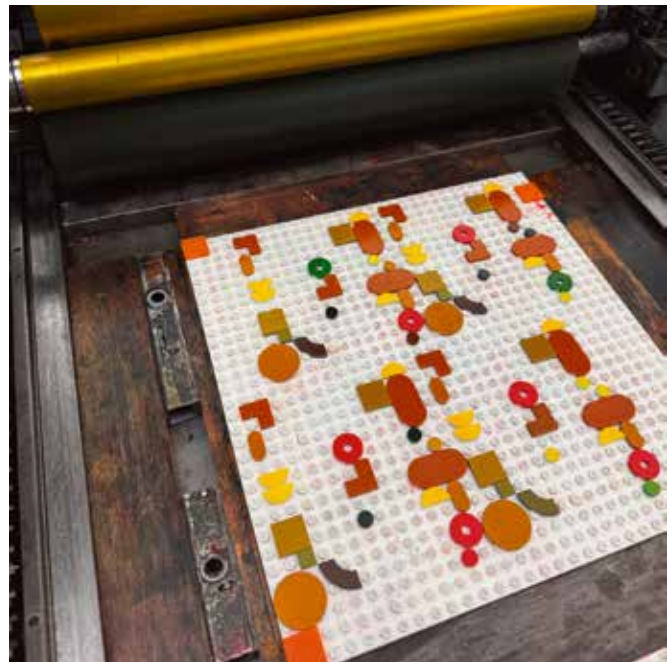
Malpa

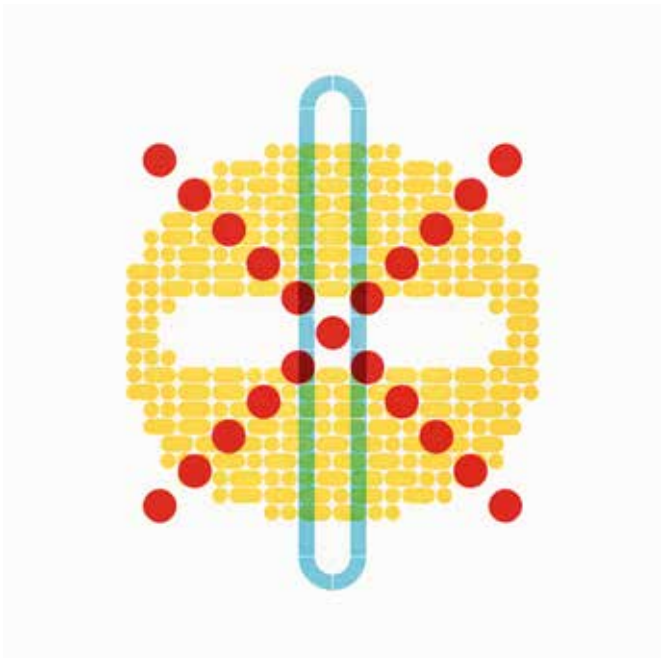


[N]

NNNN is a playful and freeing expression of our shared initials, combining two principles of design that best represent us as a duo: order and chaos; order in the structure and repetition of letterforms, and chaos in the applied randomness of shape, color and contrast.

Naz Naddaf + Nabil Nasr





[O]

I have always been interested in chromatic type, so I chose to submit my capital O as a layered design with overprinting colors. Having never worked with LEGO® before, I found it challenging to work in such low ‘resolution’, as the modular nature of the pieces forced me to overcome my natural tendency to fuss with fine details. Participating in this project was a freeing experience for me.

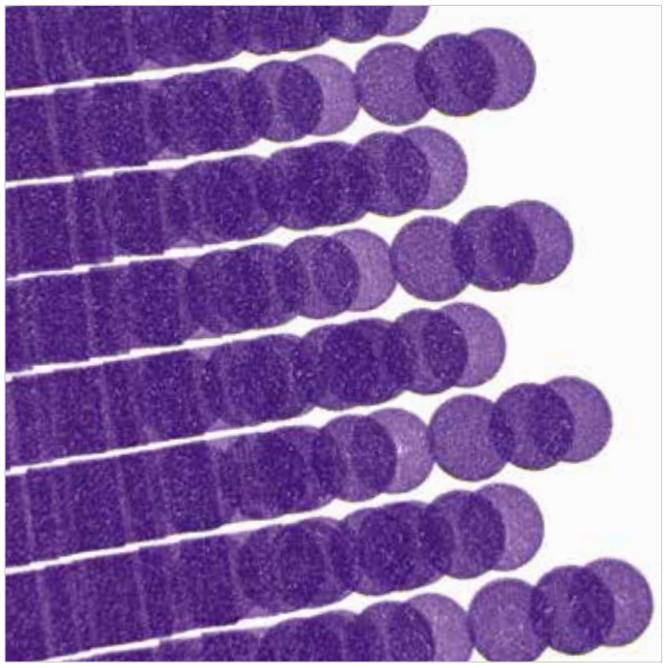
Wayne Thompson

[P]

Kente is a modular design system just like exploring modular letterform design using LEGO® bricks. My goal is to work with either the physical bricks or an inDesign digital template while bringing my cultural identity and typographic skills into the letterform “P”. This enabled me to play as much as bringing both the kente modular design system and the letterpress with the LEGO® bricks intent into a meaningful dialog forming the letter “P”.

Pedro and I understand that there’s heavy limitations with the grid/brick systems to create letterforms. But as designers, we know innovation is birthed out of constraints and freedom alike. Working in such a restrictive environment provides both a “creative tool” and a “creative challenge”. Though I felt actually working with the physical bricks would have provided a better fun exploration together with my 8-year old daughter.

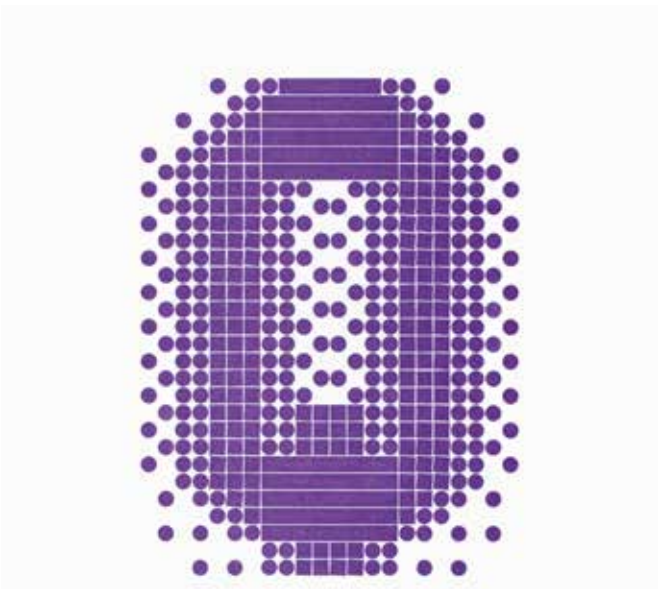
Simon Charwey



[Q]

The “Q” plays with optical effects as it induces the sensation of movement and vibration by invoking a halftone fade-out.

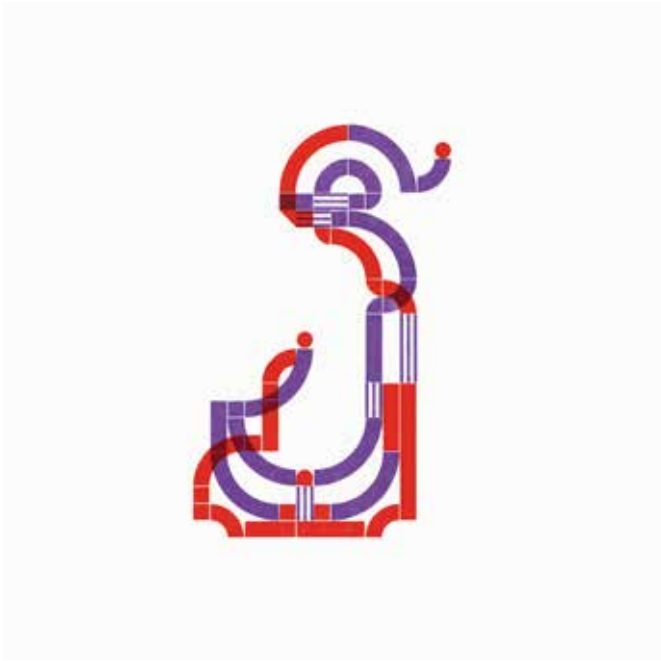
Fabiola Mejía



[R]

Through this piece, I wanted to capture aspects of the vibrant urban identity and cultural heritage of Singapore, my home. I drew inspiration from the patterns of Peranakan tiles, known for their ornate designs. The floral and greenery elements reflect Singapore’s reputation as a Garden City, where nature is thoughtfully integrated into its urban landscape. By blending these influences with the use of geometric shapes, I hoped to create a design that reflects the harmony between heritage and modernity in Singapore.

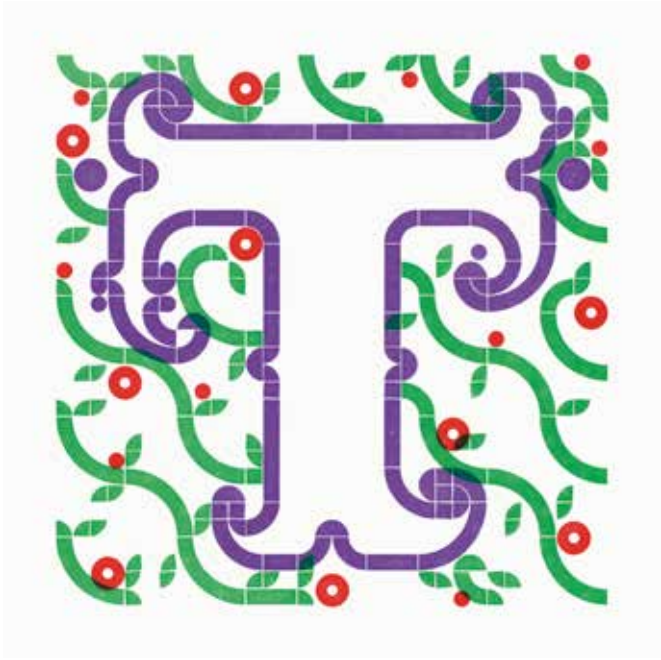
Eunice Chiong



[**S**]

Maybe it's because I've always got games on the brain, but working on this letter reminded me of connecting puzzles in video games—in particular, the hacking minigame from the Bioshock series. In this minigame, the player must connect randomly-appearing pieces of pipe on a grid from Point A to Point B. Just like our LEGO® pieces, the pipes consist of a predetermined set of pipe pieces (straight, curved, long, short, etc) and players must scramble to connect them before time runs out. Bioshock's Art Deco aesthetic also mirrors how the LEGO® pieces curve and connect, with surprisingly sleek and refined forms. I set additional parameters for myself by establishing start and end points, intertwining two colors in a "race" to get to the end point.

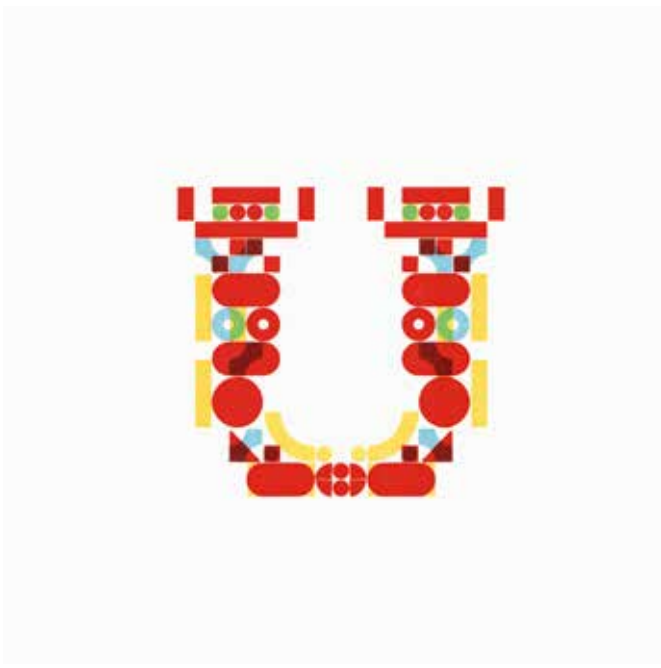
Grace Spee



[**T**]

In my initial experimentation, I tried to create a blackletter T. I was curious about how one could create curves given a typically straight letterform, and within such a rigid, gridded process. After playing around, I liked the unexpected curves and noticed my letterform began to look more and more like a drop cap. Leaning into the idea of an illustrated drop cap, I tried to create flourishes on my letterform and embellish the entire square with a floral motif of sorts.

Layne Thue-Bludworth



[**U**]

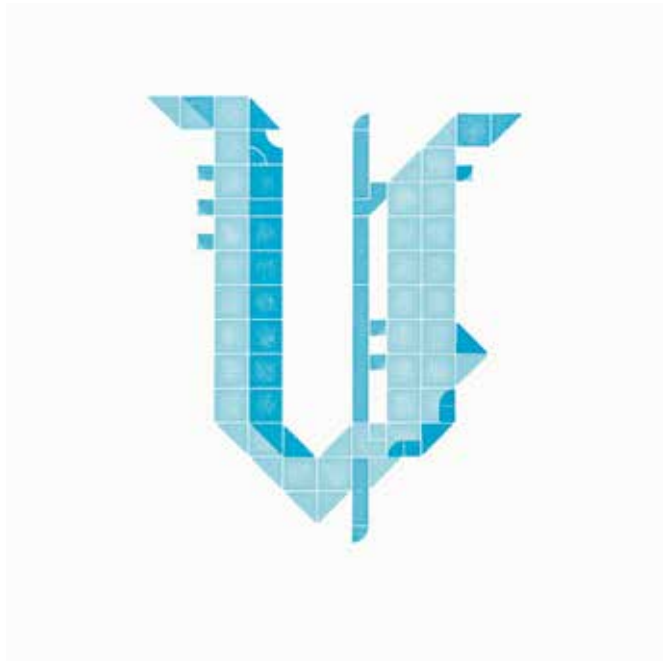
I am exploring the idea of layering a pattern into the letter "U." It fascinates me how layering can introduce a playful element to the otherwise mundane appearance of the letter while preserving its solid form and structure.

Boom Promphan Suksumek

[**V**]

The design showcases a bold, gothic-inspired letter “V” crafted from LEGO® bricks. Its three-layered construction focuses on angles and widths that mimic the chisel tip of a calligraphy pen while evoking the flowing folds of ribbon or paper.

Eric Von Haynes



[**W**]

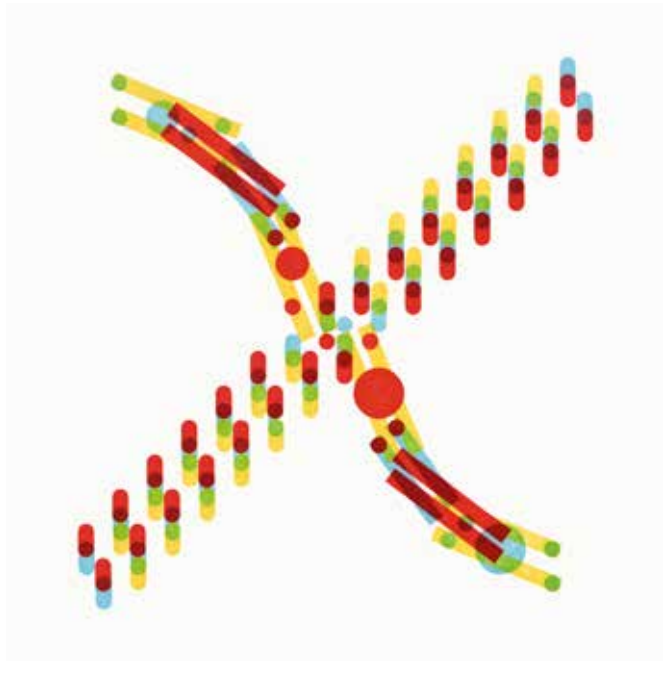
The letter *W* arrived late to the Latin alphabet, emerging from Anglo-Saxon, Old English, and runic languages, originally written as *uu* and later as two interlocked *V*s. Early printing presses often used the *UU* block due to availability and structural stability, later influencing the letter’s evolving shape. The letterform design for this project blends ornate Old English and calligraphic Blackletter styles with contemporary geometry, layering historic and modern elements. With the intent to pay tribute to the *W*’s origins while visually exploring its transformation through writing and printing history.

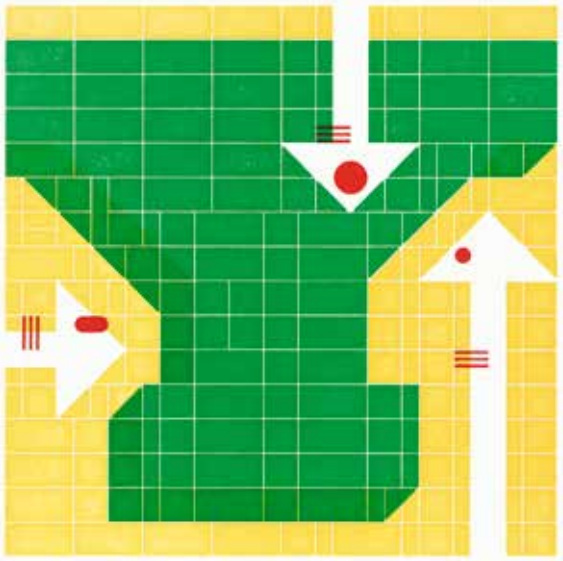
Jennifer Wandro

[**X**]

The letter “X” was ideal for a two-person collaboration as we each could be responsible for one stroke. Daniel took the top left to bottom right stroke. Madeleine took the bottom left to top right stroke. Daniel was interested in escaping the quadrature of the LEGO grid by using hypotenuses of right triangles. Using a thinner base combined with an extra layer of LEGO allowed the long strips to fit onto two carefully chosen studs. His first draft consisted of just the linear pieces combining to make a curve, but Madeleine’s circle-forward design inspired the addition of the decorative circles and matching color combinations. Madeleine was interested in the potential of using a single LEGO piece. She experimented with a design that solely uses Tile, Round 1 × 2 Oval [1126], creating a repeating pattern that has the illusion of Tile, Round 1 × 1 [98138] within the overlaps.

UIC Print Lab (**Daniel Mellis** + **Madeleine Aguilar**)





[Y]

My Big Y draws inspiration from an Egyptian Expanded Bold wood type, straight from Alan Kitching's A–Z book. Its 45-degree diagonal lines were a perfect match for LEGO® building blocks. While experimenting with overprint ideas, I saw an opportunity to give the Big Y its three-dimensional qualities.

Then came the arrow-shaped counter—it took on a life of its own, inviting its buddies into the conversation. The result? A playful nod to the simplicity of Brazilian multimedia artist and illustrator Guto Lacaz.

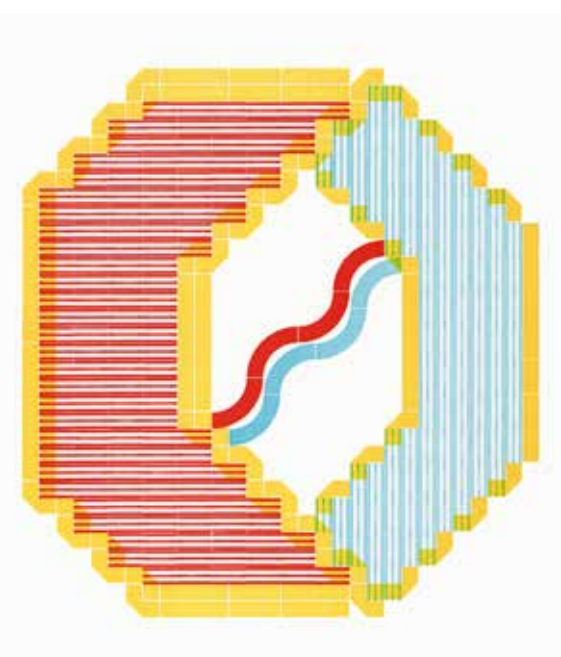
Is that a mouth or a mustache? We may never know.

Henrique Nardi

[Z]

I have received an education in both Architecture and Visual Communication, and I have always been interested in the many ways we understand and use space. In my journey as a designer, one of the most important books has always been Invisible Cities by Italo Calvino. When Pedro invited me to design the letter Z, I imagined a city – Zeta – shaped by different forms and colors.
A letter, the last one of the alphabet, that would contain all the other letters, shapes, symbols, and their possible variations.

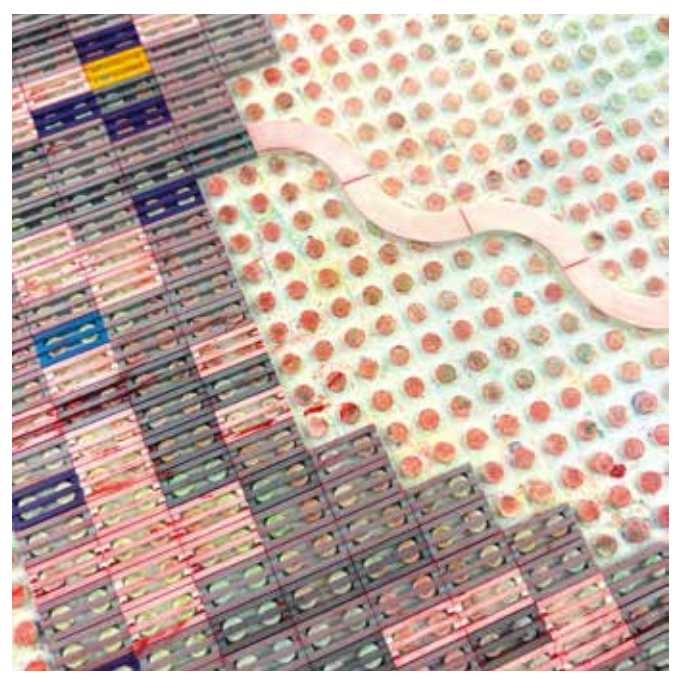
Andrea Zaccuri



[0]

We took inspiration for our number "0" from the beautiful chromatic type manufactured by William H. Page & Co. while embracing the simplicity of designing with modular blocks.

Liz + Steve Garst (Provisional Press)



[**1**]

Step closer. Look closely. Step back. Look again. In a field of flowers beneath shifting clouds, the number “1” stands as a visual representation of sub-pixel font rendering in LEGO® form.

Sub-pixel rendering uses tiny red, green, and blue dots that make up each pixel to smooth and clarify letters on a screen, infusing monochrome letters with subtle hints of color. By blending hues, sub-pixel rendering transforms black-and-white typography into something more legible through color.

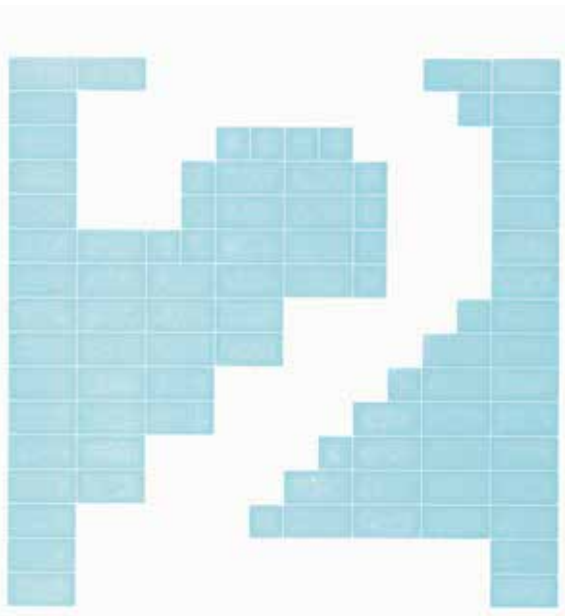
So, next time you zoom in on a screen and spot red or blue fringes on the letters, you’ll recognize sub-pixel font rendering at work.

Raven Mo

[**2**]

The concept behind the design of the number 2 is to use the negative spaces. In typography, white spaces (negative spaces) are crucial because, as Massimo Vignelli mentioned, white spaces provide rhythm, much like in music. Another key aspect is the construction of the shape, which is closely related to pixels. This design choice was intentional, adapting to the medium without using curves to round the angles. This approach also serves as a challenge to design a pixelated letter that will be printed manually.

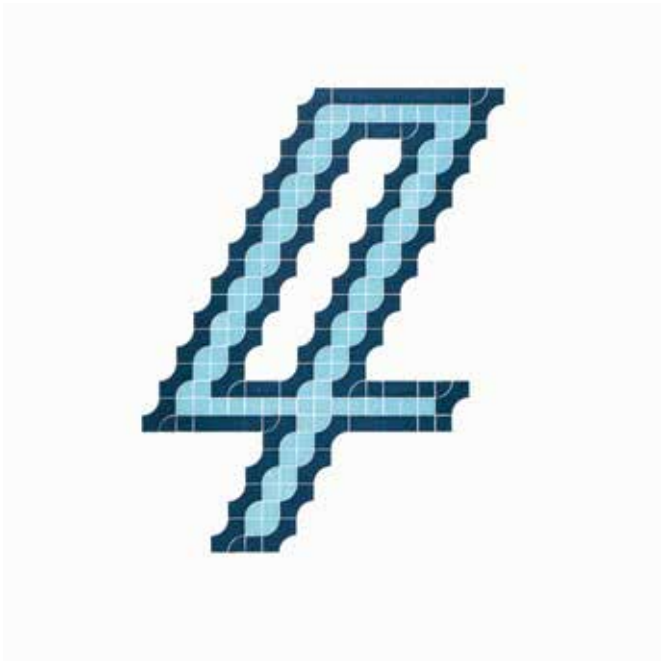
Fabio Mario Rizzotti



[**3**]

My idea for this composition is rooted in this particular style of figure which I really love but don’t see as often. I started the composition by drawing the skeleton then mapping out certain shape combinations until I was able to piece together an effective form. After completing most of the design I started to experiment with colors, but ended up reverting to a unified color combination where I can appreciate the combinations of forms and negative space.

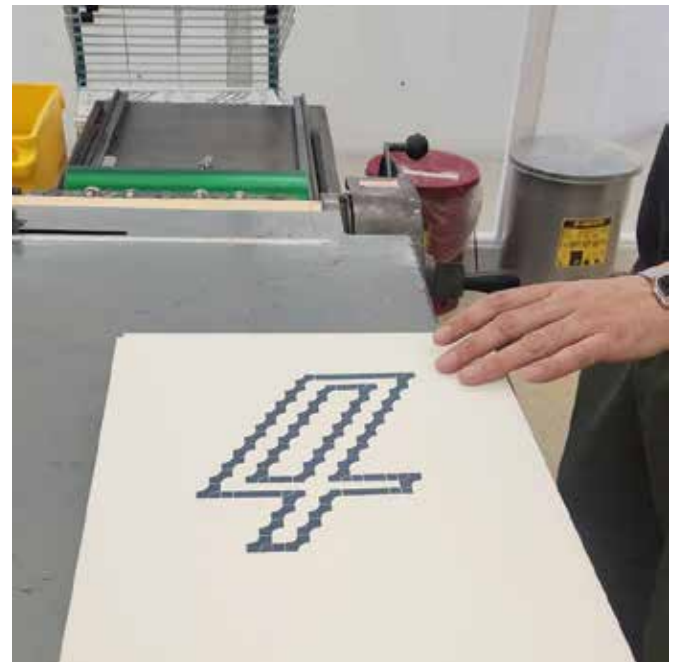
Leo Vicenti

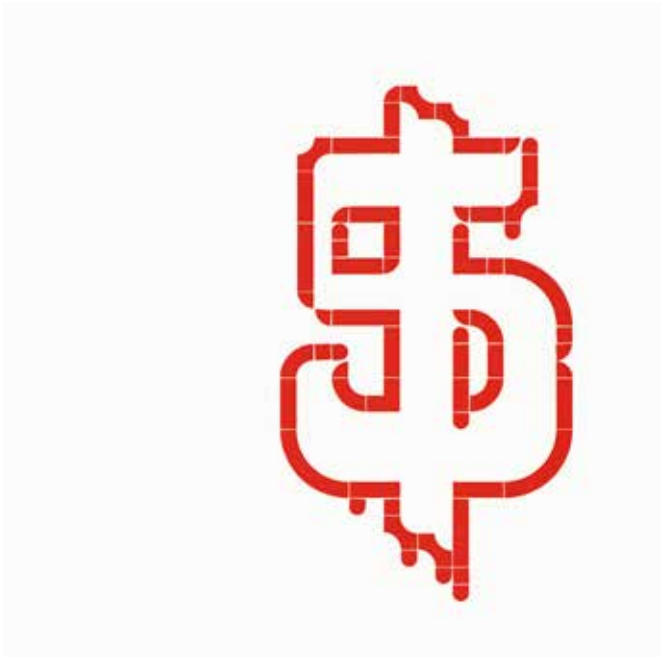


[**4**]

For my composition, I wanted to explore the possibility of creating an italic number with LEGO® pieces. The diagonal line presented a challenge due to the rigid nature of the LEGO® grid. By employing a staggered, terraced building method, I was able to generate an italic-like form, with the added characteristic of the spiked outer edge.

Austin Watson

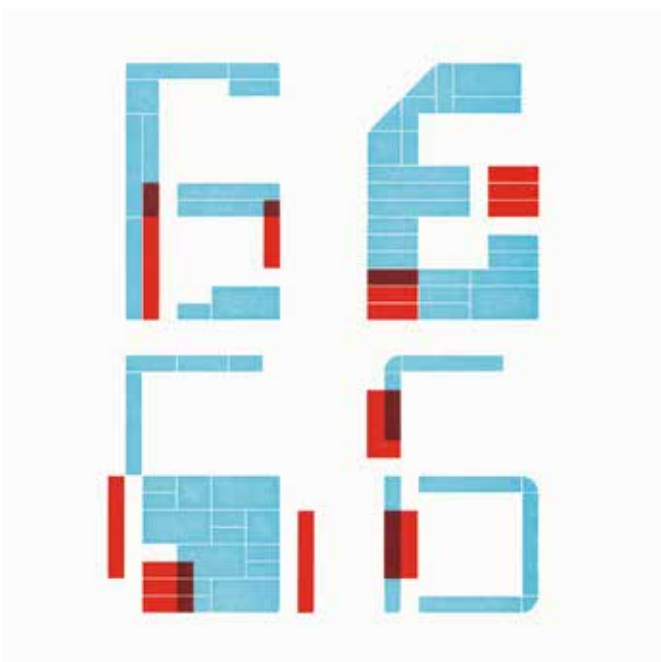




[**5**]

I wondered if it would be possible, given a grid and a small number of standardized parts, to evoke something painted quickly on an uneven surface.

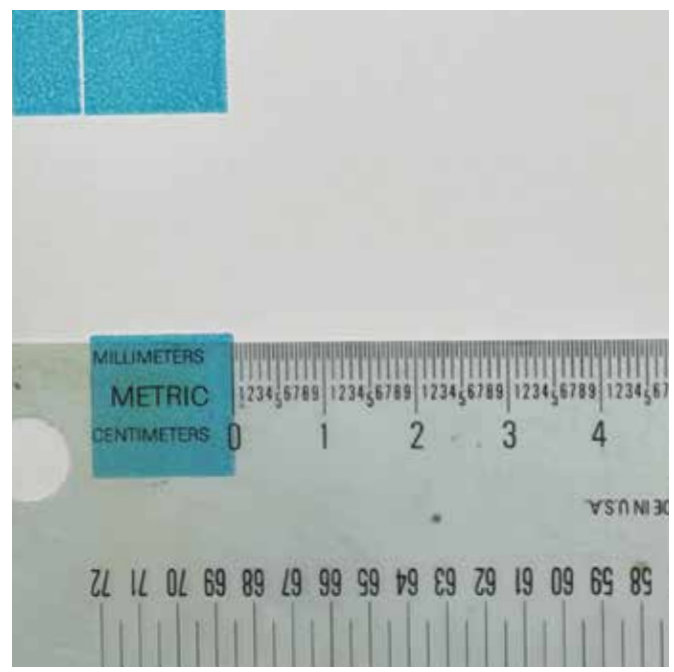
J. Dakota Brown



[**6**]

Clean lines, geometric shapes, and a reduced color palette—the Bauhaus aesthetic has always fascinated me. When I picked up the simple basic forms of the LEGO® bricks, I immediately thought of this design movement. My „6es“ are an experimental fusion of architecture and typography. By building and combining these shapes, I created a design that feels both structured and playful—staying true to the Bauhaus spirit.

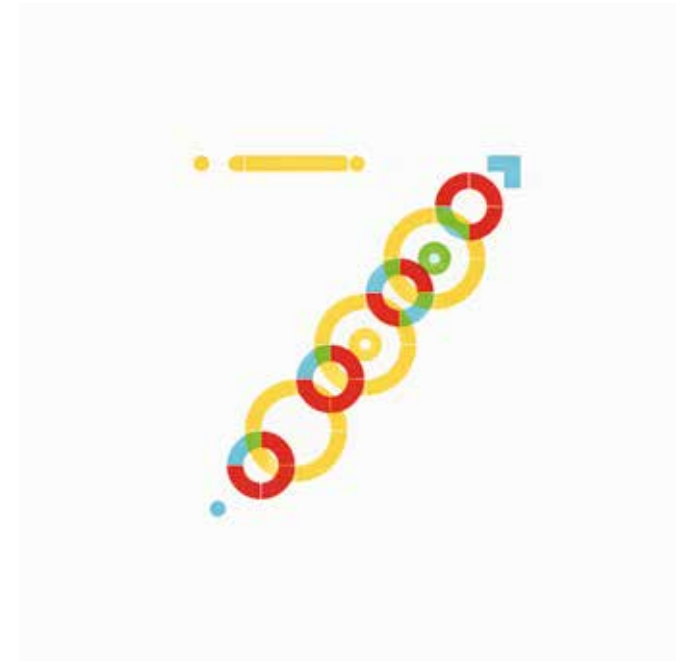
Sina Niemeier



[**7**]

Central to this composition are the 7 large circular shapes (3 yellow, 4 red). From the ancient observation of the seven visible celestial bodies (Sun, Moon, Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn), seven is rich in symbolism. In medieval education, one pursued the trivium (grammar, rhetoric, and logic) and the quadrivium (music, arithmetic, geometry, and astronomy), a total of seven subjects collectively known as the liberal arts. To the Pythagoreans particular numbers had unique spiritual properties. Seven consisted of the union of the physical (4) with the spiritual (3). Seven symbolizes solitude, hidden knowledge, spiritual truth, and introspection.

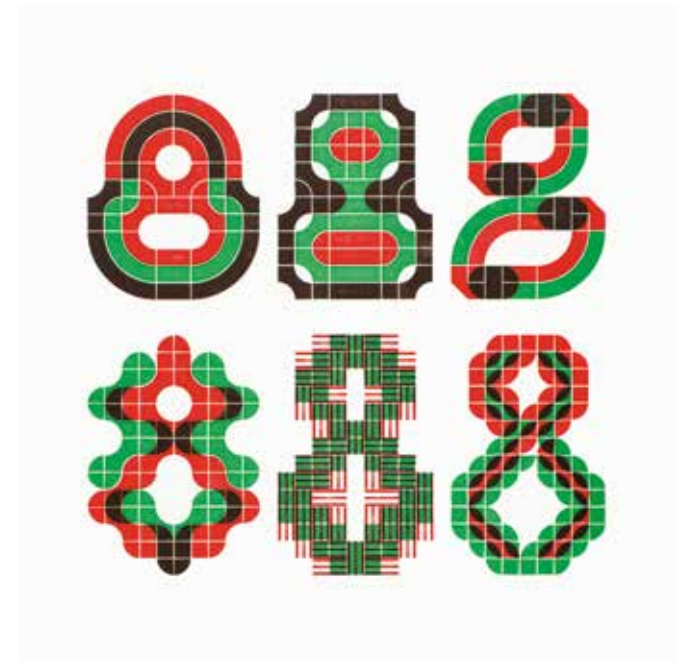
Robert Zolna

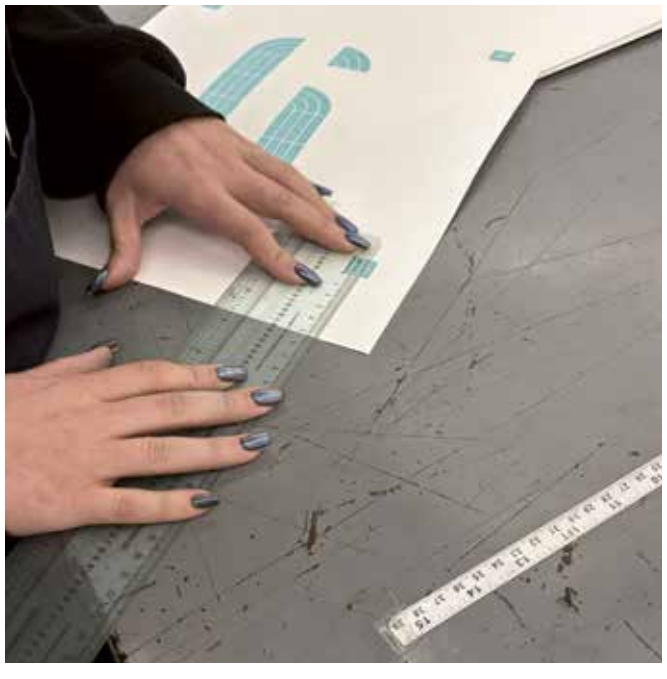


[**8**]

The approach for these letterforms looks at finding an intersection between modular typefaces and chromatic wood type. Designing with LEGO® plates is somewhat limiting in that only so many forms can be made from the selection of plates provided which exist at a fixed size. Through layering colors in multiple print runs one can find additional smaller forms and affordances. Many apologies to Pedro for using so many 1x1 plates.

D Josh Cook





[**9**]

This number is a stencil style 9 inspired by the drawings of Josef Albers in the early 1920's and the constructivist inline effect you see is a nice by-product of the medium.

Craig Ward

[**A**] **Hala Al-Ani**, born in Iraq in 1986 and raised in the UAE, co-founded Mobius Design Studio in Sharjah. She holds a BSc in Visual Communication from the American University of Sharjah, an MDes in Graphic Design from the University of Illinois Chicago, and an MA in Iconic Research from the Basel School of Design. An Assistant Professor at the American University of Sharjah, her work explores overlooked design narratives, focusing on Arabic typography and graphic design. She has showcased her work in renowned venues such as the Istanbul Design Biennial and has won awards, including Best in Show at the Typography Annual Communication Arts Competition.

[**B**] **Philip Burton**: "A life dedicated to teaching and designing filled with remarkable observations and people."

[**C**] **Nuno Coelho** is a Porto-based Portuguese communication designer; artist; curator; professor of the Department of Architecture (DARQ) of the University of Coimbra, where he teaches on the Bachelor's and Master's degree courses in Design and Multimedia; and researcher at the Centre for Interdisciplinary Studies (CEIS20). One of the subjects he teaches is Typography in Digital Media, which explores temporal and interactive typography. He holds a PhD in Contemporary Art from the University of Coimbra, a Master's in Design and Graphic Production from the University of Barcelona, and a degree in Communication Design and Graphic Art from the University of Porto. As an independent designer, he has worked for individuals and organisations predominantly in Portugal, as well as in other countries, mainly for culture-related clients. He has developed self-initiated research-based projects on the intersection between design and art on social and political issues. His diverse activities (organisation and participation in exhibitions, holding talks and conferences, conducting workshops, fieldwork, and work visits) have spanned 40 countries worldwide. www.nunocoelho.net

[**D**] **Ted Davis** is a media artist / designer / educator from the United States now based in Switzerland, where he teaches interaction design within the Institute Digital Communication Environments IDCE, Basel Academy of Art and Design FHNW. His open-source projects (basil.js, XYscope, P5LIVE, p5.glitch) enable designers to code within Adobe InDesign, render vector graphics on vector displays, collaboratively live code p5.js, and glitch real-time from the web browser. In 2021 he received the Basel Media Art Prize for p5.glitch and a Processing Foundation Teaching Fellowship. In 2024 he won the Swiss Design Awards in Media & Interaction Design for P5LIVE.

[**E**] **Tanner Woodford** is the founder and executive director of the Design Museum of Chicago, where he champions design's ability to shape a better world. As an artist, he creates optimistic, typographic murals, with works featured at WNDR Museum, Soho House Chicago, and permanently installed at Weber Shandwick in the John Hancock Building. Tanner serves on the City of Chicago's Cultural Advisory Council and teaches Design Thinking for Social Change at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. With a Bachelor of Science in Design from Arizona State University, he is irrepressibly optimistic and believes design can improve the human condition.

[**F**] **Otto Valladares Paim** is a 9 year-old and based in Porto, Portugal. He likes Football, to draw, to watch Science Fiction and eat Popcorn. **Fabian Harb** is Otto's father and a typeface designer and director at the digital type foundry Dinamo.

[**G**] **Dobra** is a graphic design studio based in Porto, Portugal, working with cultural institutions, book and record publishers, theatre companies, music promoters, and bands. The studio focuses on visual identity, editorial design, posters, and typographic experimentation. It also develops signage systems, extending its approach to spatial and experiential design. **Dobra** explores the communicative potential of graphic design, tailoring each project to its specific context and audience. The studio values close collaboration with clients and partners, fostering creative relationships grounded in cultural awareness and long-term engagement.

[**H**] **Dina Benbrahim** is a Moroccan designer and scholar who uses an intersectional feminist lens to investigate design for visibility, civic action, and social justice with minoritized communities to collectively reimagine equitable futures. She has been exploring pan-African and feminist design histories in North Africa. Among multiple essays she wrote, she is the author of Woven in Oral History: An Incomplete Taxonomy of Amazigh Symbols in the book Centered edited by Kaleena Sales. Currently, she is an Assistant Professor of Graphic Design at the University of Connecticut and the Director of the Department of Art and Art History's Design Center (DC).

[**I**] **Paul Hardman** (Studio And Paul) is a designer from Liverpool, firmly rooted in Portugal. His highly varied work mixes analogue processes and digital experiments in a constantly evolving visual output that explores the plasticity of language through expressive forms. His work has covered everything from children's books to identity design, theatre posters to interactive installations. He has taught on the Design and Multimedia course at the University of Coimbra since 2013.

[**J**] **Kelsey Elder** is an educator, typographer, and type-technology enthusiast based in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania (USA). He is currently an Assistant Professor at Carnegie Mellon University, where he teaches graphic design, typeface design, and history. He has previously taught at the Rhode Island School of Design, Purchase College, and Virginia Commonwealth University. He received his BFA in Graphic Design from the Minneapolis College of Design, his MFA in 2-d Design from the Cranbrook Academy of Art, and is a graduate of the Typeface Design Intensive at the University of Reading and the Expert Type Design Class at the Plantin Institute of Typography.

[**K**] **Katharine Wolff** enrolled in a liberal arts university, received a BFA in Visual Communications in 1975, and started working as a packaging designer in Chicago, later for Design Planning Group, an office for corporate identity, where she worked with several previous designers of the Chicago branch of Unimark and first heard about a design school in Switzerland. After attending the Basel Weiterbildungsklasse für Grafik in 1980, she began her teaching career at the Institute of Design in Chicago and was then offered to chair the fledgling design department at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, where she remained for the next ten years. In 1984, the same year the first MacIntosh was introduced, Katharine received grants to study with stone carver and master calligrapher Ieuan Rees in Wales and type designer Hermann Zapf at RIT in New York. Amid ongoing technological shifts in the graphic industry and as an educator for over 35 years, she has devoted herself to fundamental studies in art and design by emphasizing related principles among drawing, writing, and typography. Since having relocated to Switzerland in 1992, letterform became her specialty. She has also become a translator from German into English for many publications, including essays, articles, and books for her former teachers, such as Wolfgang Weingart (My Way to Typography) and Armin Hofmann (Reduction. Ethics. Didactics.), and the recently published English edition of Dorothea Hofmann's book on the history of design education in Basel and its role in Swiss Modernism (The Birth of a Style).

[**L**] **Marcia Lausen** is Distinguished Professor Emeritus at the University of Illinois Chicago where she served as the founding director of the UIC School of Design. In 1997, she established the Chicago office of Studio/lab, an award-winning communication design consultancy. Following the 2000 presidential election, Marcia played a leading role in Design for Democracy, a national election design reform initiative of AIGA. Her book of the same title was published in 2007 by the University of Chicago Press. Marcia was named a 2004 Fast Company Master of Design and a 2010 Fellow of AIGA. In 2015 she received the AIGA Medal.

[**M**] **Malpa** is a family collective encompassing a studio for graphic design led by Sonia Malpeso, a record label directed by Marco and Fabio Malpeso, and a café-art space run by Federica Malpeso. Malpa Studio is the evolution of Malpa Construction, a building company started by their father in the 1970s. The studio is based between Mexico City (MX), Berlin (DE), and West New York, NJ (USA). www.malpa.com

[**N**] **Naz Naddaf** and **Nabil Nasr** are both multidisciplinary designers based in the UAE, with experience across the spectrum of branding, editorial design, experience design, concept design, and illustration. **Naz** currently teaches Visual Communication as an Assistant Professor at the American University of Sharjah, while **Nabil** is a Creative Director leading graphics and experience design for events. Together, they are partners in crime and often collaborate on projects doing this and that, here and there!

[**O**] **Wayne Thompson** is a type designer and educator from Newcastle, Australia. He holds a Masters degree in Type Design (MRes TD) from the University of Reading, UK, and is currently serving as a board member of ATypI.org. Wayne's long term aim is to contribute an Aussie flavour to global type design.

[**P**] **Simon Charwey** is an African type designer and advocate for an active preservation and participation in the archives of African design system(s). Charwey is an alumnus of Yale School of Art, MFA Graphic Design program, where his final thesis explored an index of African scripts / writing systems, and their typographic innovations which he analyzed and visualized into a big book yet to be published. Charwey is known for his curiosity and explorations into myriads of realms and cultures. He believes design is a cultural response, and culture is a design response. This narrative and his advocacy role for equitable design practice drive his practice as a designer.

[**Q**] **Fabiola Mejía** (she/her) is a type designer from Costa Rica. She completed the Type@Cooper Condensed Program in NYC and received an MA in Typeface Design from TypeMedia (KABK), in The Netherlands. Besides working remotely as a core designer with Dinamo Typefaces, she runs SUPERCONTINENTE, a platform dedicated to her independent type design practice and collaborative explorations.

[**R**] **Eunice Chiong** (aka EuniceDenise) is a multi-passionate creative based in Singapore. In recent years, her work has focused on modular designs created through printmaking, primarily using LEGO®. She enjoys the blending of modern pixel art styles with traditional print techniques, finding joy in the tactile process of creating physical artwork after years of working digitally, both as an artist and in her career as a digital marketer. Her long-standing interest in hand-lettering has shaped her passion

for creating layouts that combine patterns, images, and typography, a distinctive feature in much of her work.

[**S**] Born and raised in Chicagoland, **Grace Spee** earned her bachelor's in psychology from Kent State in Ohio. After working several years of working in psychological research labs, Grace earned her Masters in Design from University of Illinois Chicago. Currently, she is a Clinical Assistant Professor as well as the Assistant Director of Events and Communications in the UIC School of Design. Grace is particularly interested in the intersection of physical and digital worlds and the influence of digital space on our lives, focusing specifically on the rise of VR/AR/XR design and dimensional kinetic typography. Her thesis work manifested a combination of scientific design, video games, fictional narratives, and experimental typography. When she's not doing weird stuff with type, you can find her playing video games and petting any cats she can find.

[**T**] **Layne Thue-Bludworth** is a Chicago-based designer and educator. Her work explores the intersection of feminist principles, design, and community education. Influenced by her printmaking background, Layne's practice spans analog and digital mediums, embraces experimentation, and is often highly collaborative. Her design education brought her to Switzerland—for the Typographic Summer Program with Dafi Khüne and workshops at FHNW in Basel—and she received her MDes in Graphic Design from UIC. Layne currently works at the Art Institute of Chicago, along with teaching and freelance work.

[**U**] **Boom Promphan Suksumek** is a Thai type designer specializing in both Latin and Thai scripts. She runs her independent practice, Boomtype, and has been working in type design since 2019. After earning her master's degree from Type and Media in 2022, she has continued to focus on Thai and Latin type design, script extensions, and custom lettering. As an independent designer, she values creative freedom and aims to create well-crafted, functional typefaces. Through her work, she hopes to contribute to the development of Thai and multilingual typography in a thoughtful and meaningful way.

[**V**] **Eric Von Haynes** is a visiting senior graphic design instructor at the UIC School of Design and teaches print media at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. As president of the Chicago Printers Guild, Eric leads initiatives that support and connect printmakers across the Chicagoland area, fostering collaboration and skill-sharing within the community.

[**W**] **Jennifer Wandro** is a Chicago-based artist, designer, and educator whose cross-disciplinary work blends analog and digital media with systems design. Inspired by natural and artificial environments, she explores color, form, light, texture, and pattern through techniques like photographic abstraction, collage, and motion. Her research-driven practice encourages playful conceptual engagement and visual storytelling. Wandro earned a BA in Advertising and Communication from Northern Michigan University (2007), an MFA in Graphic Design from UIC (2013), with continued study at Basel Academy of Art and Design FHNW Summer Workshops. She has been an instructor at the UIC School of Design since 2013 and serves as the Color Theory Curriculum Coordinator for foundations.

[**X**] The **UIC School of Design Print Lab**, managed by **Daniel Mellis** and **Madeleine Aguilar**, provides students and faculty with access to laser, large-format inkjet, risograph, and letterpress printing.

↪

Daniel Mellis makes artist's books and other text based artworks on such topics as the poetry of philosophy, the phenomenology of space, the built environment, and the law. Experimental letterpress and offset printing underpins much of his work. His most recent project is a fine press / scholarly edition of the masterpiece of Russian Futurist typography printed on wallpaper *Tango with Cows*, which recreates its typography, design, and materiality as closely as possible. He received his MFA from Columbia College Chicago and has degrees in mathematics from the University of Chicago and MIT.

madeleine aguilar is a multidisciplinary artist + musician from chicago. her work is often mobile / modular / interactive and can be found in backyards, libraries, storefronts, homes, galleries & book fairs. she responds to existing environments, building structures, furniture & spaces that prompt users to actively reconsider & redefine their function(s). using the archive as form, she marks time by cataloging lived spaces, collected objects, familial histories, personal relationships, natural phenomena, mundane routines, and ephemeral moments. she is the founder of bench press, a risograph press based on friendship, play & collaboration.

[**Y**] **Henrique Nardi** is a typography educator, photographer, and graphic designer from São Paulo. He founded Tipocracia, an educational project designed to promote typographic culture in Brazil. He has organized and hosted over a dozen conferences on type and design. Furthermore, he created Brazil's first postgraduate program in Typography. **Henrique Nardi** taught Graphic, Editorial, and Typeface Design for seven years at the University of Wisconsin. Currently, he serves as the Communication Coordinator for the Tipos Latinos Brasil Committee and works as Assistant Professor of Graphic Design at Augusta University.

[**Z**] **Andrea Zaccuri** works at the intersection of design and creative development. He is especially interested in the Internet as both a communication medium and a cultural artifact. In recent years, he has specialized in digital products for cultural and business clients. In Zürich, he is part of unsorted, a collective where he focuses on self-made tools and developing a critical perspective on the use of technology in the creative sector.

[**0**] **Liz** and **Steve Garst** are printers, educators, and owners of the **Provisional Press**. They are based out of Fort Wayne, Indiana, where Steve teaches at the University of Saint Francis. They both studied printing and graphic design in college and have been collaborating ever since. They first began printing from toy blocks in 2015 when they started #legoletterpress, and have been delighted to see so many people engage with it as a medium. The husband and wife team also own and operate Provisional Press, a business that sells small printing press kits aimed at making printing and letterpress more accessible to people young and old.

[**1**] **Raven Mo** is a New York-based brand designer driven by the enduring journey of typographic excellence. As an advocate for multi-script design accessibility and representation, she is deeply invested in the intricate social relations and infrastructures built by type. Beyond design, Raven is a researcher who critically examines culturally stereotyped letterforms. Her work sheds light on their persistent marginalization in historical and contemporary contexts.

[**2**] **Fabio Mario Rizzotti** is a graphic designer and educator based in Milan. He works mainly with small-medium size companies, cultural institutions and collaborates with design studios and agencies on printed matters and digital projects.

[**3**] **Leo Vicenti** (Jicarilla Apache) is an Assistant Professor of Communication Design at Emily Carr University of Art + Design. He holds an MFA from The School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC) in Visual Communication Design and a BA in Graphic Design from Fort Lewis College.

[**4**] **Austin Watson**'s research explores the use of technology through the experimentation of tools, generative forms, and other publishing platforms. He is interested in studying the tension between analog and digital methods by investigating the relationship between humans and machines. Often partnering with cultural institutions on freelance projects, Austin has experience in motion graphics, publication design, and interactive experience.

[**5**] **J. Dakota Brown** is a graphic designer and design historian interested in histories of labor, technology, and capital. His writing has appeared in *Amalgam*, *Jacobin*, *Post45 Journal*, and the recent collection *After the Bauhaus*, *Before the Internet: A History of Graphic Design Pedagogy*. He currently works as a visiting associate professor at the UIC School of Design.

[**6**] **Sina Niemeier**: "I have been working as an Art Director at TATIN Design Enterprises in Basel, Switzerland, since 2014. My role spans across concept development and design tasks within visual communications, with a particular focus on crafting and implementing communication and brand strategies. I started my education by studying architecture before completing my degree in Graphic Design at HAWK Hildesheim and College of Visual Arts in St. Paul, USA."

[**7**] **Robert Zolna** is a researcher, educator, and designer. A self-professed people-nerd, he is fascinated with the human experience — how people interact physically, socially and culturally with objects, services, spaces, and each other. His current research focuses on using participatory and co-design methods in the context of patient care delivery and how by elevating the voice of the user health access can be improved for underserved patients and clinicians. He shares a joint appointment with UIC's School of Design and the Institute for Healthcare Delivery Design at UIC's Office of Population Health Sciences Program.

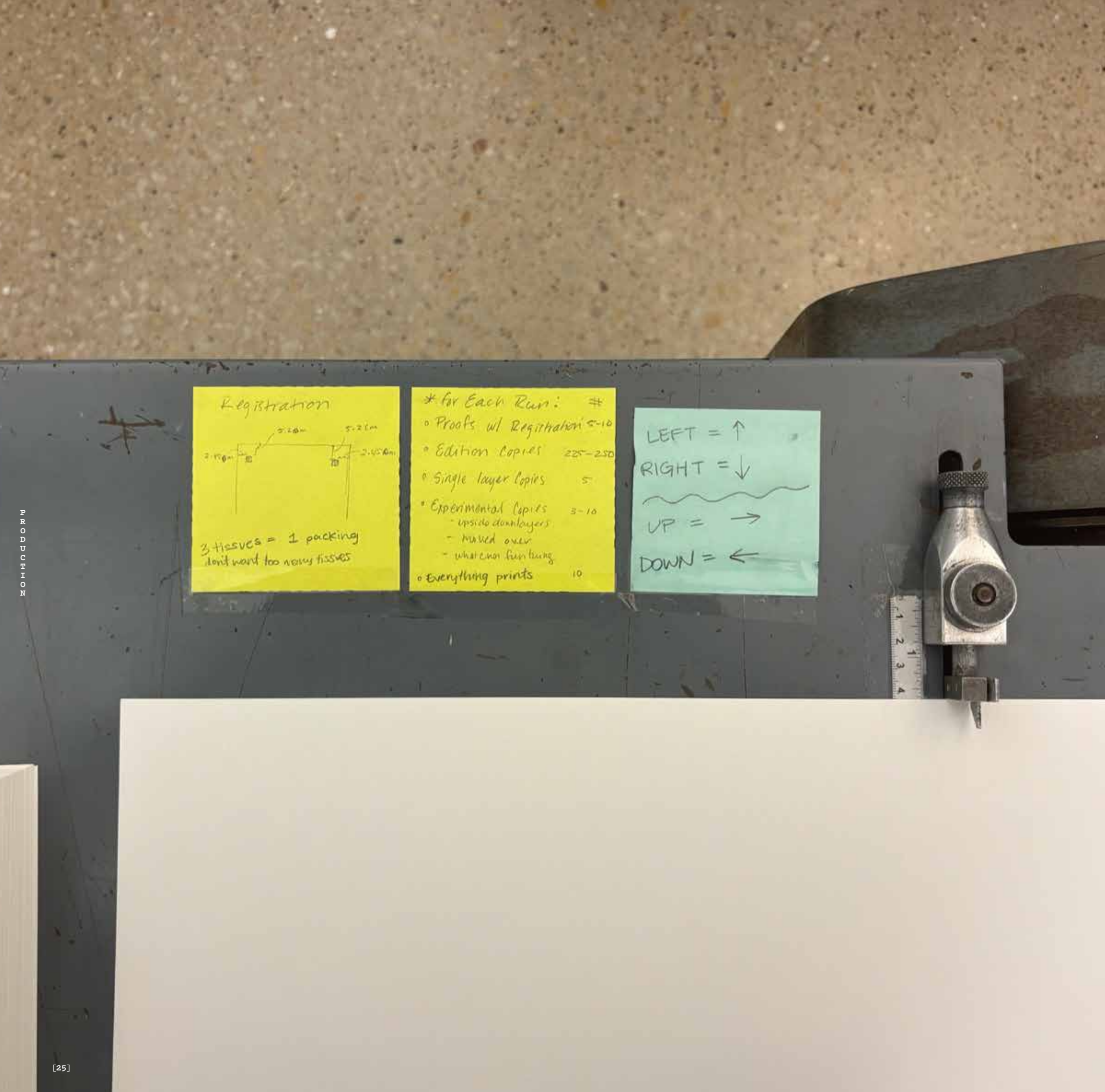
[**8**] **D Josh Cook** is an Ohio-born designer, art director, and educator living in Chicago, IL who works with an eye towards craft, ephemerality, distortion, chance operation, and the interplay of analog and digital modes of production. He holds an MDes from the University of Illinois Chicago and a BFA from Ohio University and is currently a Lecturer of Fine Arts in Visual Communication at Loyola University.

[**9**] **Craig Ward** is a British-American Design Director who is best known for his pioneering typographic works which have been seen on the covers of TIME Magazine, WIRED and The Washington Post as well as in The New York Times, The Economist and various other publications. Fascinated by the process and the concept of word as image, he founded his studio in Brooklyn in 2012 before returning to the UK in 2022 and his Instagram project BrikFont was the inspiration for this exhibition.

Once the 2024/2025 Academic Year was over, the School of Design graciously allowed us to use a room next to the UIC SoD Print Lab to serve as the center of operations for the final production stages.

In the newly designated space (as seen in the picture) we used a wall to display the prints as they were produced. This allowed us to keep track of progress, while enjoying the countdown of what was left to complete. We were able to spread all the materials on the tables to make sure we knew where everything was and help us understand what tasks were left to accomplish our goal.

This project soon blew up as the printing progressed. There were a lot of moving parts, a lot of materials, and a lot of odd bits and bobs that needed special attention. Having a dedicated space was crucial. I'm very thankful to the UIC School of Design for providing us with such resources.


Registration
5.20cm
5.21cm
2.45cm
3 tissues = 1 packing
don't want too noisy tissues
* for Each Run: #
◦ Proofs w/ Registration 5-10
◦ Edition Copies 225-250
◦ Single layer Copies 5
◦ Experimental Copies 3-10
- upside down layers
- moved over
- whatever fun thing
◦ Everything prints 10
LEFT = ↑
RIGHT = ↓
UP = →
DOWN = ←

Printing this alphabet was a feat. This could not have been done without the expertise of **Amira Hegazy** and the generous help of **Shannon Morrissey**. Amira and Shannon were instrumental in the whole process, from the physical labor of running the press to discussions around planning the production and brainstorming of solutions for unexpected problems. I am most grateful for their help and friendship.

This alphabet took about eight months to physically produce, from the first day we started color testing to the last day we printed this booklet. Numbers speak volumes: more than 8,000 bricks, almost 11,000 sheets of paper, and over 27,000 passes on the press. We welcomed colleagues and old and new friends to UIC to share what we were doing and learning in this process. These were a truly collaborative moments, especially when some of the designers of the letters were able to come to UIC and see us print their letters, making small adjustments and refinements to the letterforms as the proofs came off the press.

As someone with minimal experience with letterpress printing before this project, seeing the prints coming off of the press brought a sense of accomplishment. While operating, setting up, and cleaning the press may have been straightforward, the real challenges came when we were aligning and realigning all the layers that needed to be perfectly registered. Rotating small knobs and making adjustments as small as fractions of a millimeter made me realize how important it is to be consistent and precise while printing.

We decided that we would print a single color per day, organizing the print runs so that we printed a single layer of two to four letters or numbers. Sometimes everything would go well and we'd be able to print three layers; if it was going really well, four got printed. But there were also days when we were only able to print one. **Daniel Mellis**, one of our print lab specialists, ensured the press ran smoothly, fixing and adjusting the machine as it wore down from the intensive use. His colleague, **Madeleine Aguilar**, was also there to help with whatever task was needed. Their contributions were crucial for keeping our pace and helped us avoid bottlenecks.

It is important to remember that Vandercook presses are proof presses that were not designed for heavy production. There were days when we would pull 1,000 prints, while the average day was between 500 and 750 prints. Sometimes the press felt like a human being, requiring special attention and nurturing.
We found ourselves thinking of it as an extension to our own bodies. Just as we had to take care of our muscles and joints, we had to be careful and attentive to the press, listening to what it was saying, interpreting every sound made by the cranks and the ink humming between the press's rollers.

Finally, we had to collate, cut, and document the whole alphabet so we could preserve these images digitally and share them with people online. The printed alphabet is produced in a limited edition of 100 numbered copies contained in a special case designed and letterpress printed for the purpose. Printed in silver on black paper, using the front and back of a LEGO® base plate and the grid where the LEGO® bricks sit, the case aims to honor the work it contains. The large format case was printed at Spudnik Press in Chicago, the only publicly accessible space in the city that has a Vandercook SP-25.

A smaller edition of 25 bound and numbered copies was also produced, as well as about 75 unnumbered editions in a simple plastic wrapper.

We also dedicated some time to taking high-quality photographs of each letterform to capture the visual effects of the printing process. This was done at Latitude Chicago, alongside the post-editing help of Rafael Barontini, to guarantee the highest possible quality in the photographs found in this booklet as we present the complete alphabet to the world.

To conclude the process, a Zoom call was organized, bringing together the contributors to the project, who connected from different places around the world to exchange experiences. A recording was shared with those who were not able to be present. This was definitely one of the highlights of the project, the moment when we all came together—even if only virtually—to disclose the personal story behind each letter and to build new connections and perhaps friendships that may lead to more collaborative projects in the future.

This is clearly a project that could not have happened if not through collaborative co-creative energy:
a gift to be cherished.

Amira Hegazy is a designer, printer, and historian whose practice spans across physical, digital and scholarly media. She is an Adjunct Assistant Professor in the UIC School of Design. Amira's research investigates the social impacts of typographic design and considers how love functions as a method for designing within community-based design practices. Amira is the principal designer at **a mirror**, a design and fine press publishing studio based in Chicago, IL.

Amira began working on *A2Z* as a production advisor in 2023 as the initial concepts were still forming. During this time she helped Pedro consider the necessary elements of high volume physical production. She was formally brought into the work as the publisher in Fall 2024. As the master printer and material specialist, she ensured the elements of the letterpress process maintained a high quality and honored the visual intricacies of the digital designs. Beyond the technical elements of letterpress printing, Amira took on the role of mentor to Shannon Morrissey who learned letterpress printing through this project.

Shannon Morrissey is an MDes student studying Graphic Design at the University of Illinois Chicago. With a keen interest in how design might make overwhelming information landscapes more accessible and emotionally meaningful, Shannon earnestly explores the disciplines of visual storytelling, computational design, and craft.

Shannon was the Graduate Research Assistant on *A2Z*. Through this process she learned letterpress printing under the direction of Amira Hegazy and was immersed in conversations around digital to physical output as well as project management with Pedro Neves. Over the four months of her assistantship, she learned all of the technical elements of printing on a Vandercook Proof Press and lent this new expertise to produce *A2Z*. She took part in every element of the production, and without her contribution, the project would have taken many more months to complete.

I believe I underestimated the amount of labor that would be necessary to produce this alphabet—from the setup to the printing to the cleanup, ordering materials, and managing deadlines. All the hard work made the project incredibly rewarding, but equally challenging while in the making. In the final pages of this booklet, you will find all the data and details of the production of the alphabet, alongside some of the pictures we collected.

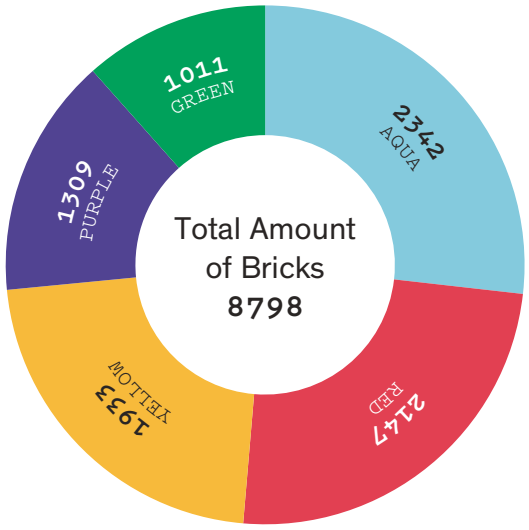
LOCKERS	Total 21	3rd Floor Corner	Code XXXX	9 Locks Itzel	12 Locks Print Lab		
6A Work in Progress							
3A Complete Letters (D, A, F, 2)	3B Complete Letters (C,J, 9, I, 3)	3C Complete Letters (0, 1, Y, S, Q)		3D Paper (Empty Box)	3E Paper (Open Box)	3F Paper (Full Box)	3G Paper (Full Box)
2A Complete Letters (B, 8, 4, H)	2B "Bad" Prints (Box)	2C Complete Letters (T)		2D Ink + Ultrasonic Cleaner Machine	2E Used Baseplates, Linoleum, Leftover Bricks	2F American Bricks + Historical Documents	2G Baseplates (For Printing)
1A Proof Paper + In Progress	1B Old Mixed Paper Polybags 11x17 + Acetate Paper	1C Black Paper + Baseplate Prints (Silver layer only)		1D Paper (Full Box)	1E Paper (Full Box)	1F 12x12 Dunwell Binders	1G Paper (Full Box)

W	LETTER	LAYER	C	LETTER	LAYER	C	LETTER	LAYER	C	LETTER	LAYER	C		TAL	IN PROGRESS
(1)	2	AQUA	START	A	AQUA	START	–	–	–	–	–	–	(2)	1	A
(2)	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	
(3)	A	GREEN		I	GREEN	START	F	GREEN	START	–	–	–	–	1	A, I, F
(4)	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	
(5)	A	PURPLE		F	PURPLE		I	PURPLE		–	–	–	(A)	3	F
(6)	D	RED	START	F	RED		C	RED	START	–	–	–	(F)	4	D,C
(7)	D	YELLOW		C	YELLOW		J	YELLOW	START	–	–	–	(D)	5	C,J
(8)	C	AQUA		J	AQUA		9	AQUA	START	–	–	–	(C+J)	6	9
(9)	9	RED		3	RED	START	–	–	–	–	–	–	(9)	7	3
(10)	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
(11)	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
(12)	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
(13)	I	PURPLE		3	PURPLE		B	PURPLE	START	–	–	–	(3+1)	9	B
(14)	B	GREEN		Y	GREEN	START	8	GREEN	START	–	–	–	–	9	B,Y, 8
(15)	B	RED		Y	RED		8	RED		S	RED	START	(8+9)	11	Y
(16)	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
(17)	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
(18)	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
(19)	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
(20)	Y	YELLOW		0	YELLOW	START	1	YELLOW	START	L	YELLOW	START	(Y)	12	0, 1, 8, L
(21)	0	RED		1	RED		–	–	–	–	–	–	–	12	0, 1, 8, L
(22)	0	AQUA		1	AQUA		–	–	–	–	–	–	(1+8)	14	S, L
(23)	Q	PURPLE	START	S	PURPLE		4	PURPLE	START	–	–	–	(S+Q)	16	4, L
(24)	4	GREEN		T	GREEN	START	H	GREEN	START	–	–	–	–	16	4,L,T,H
(25)	T	PURPLE		H	PURPLE		N	PURPLE	START	–	–	–	–	16	4,L,T,H,N
(26)	H	AQUA		4	AQUA		–	–	–	–	–	–	(H+4)	18	L,T, N
(27)	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
(28)	T	RED		–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	(T)	19	–
(29)	L	RED		–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
(30)	N	RED		O	RED	START	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
(31)	N	YELLOW		–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	(N)	20	–
(32)	O	AQUA		U	AQUA	START	G	AQUA	START	–	–	–	–	–	U, O, G
(33)	O	YELLOW		G	YELLOW		L	YELLOW		–	–	–	(O)	21	U, G, L
(34)	L	AQUA		6	AQUA	START	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	U, G, L, 6
(35)	L	RED		6	RED		–	–	–	–	–	–	(L+6)	23	U, G
(36)	G	RED		U	RED		–	–	–	–	–	–	(G)	24	U
(37)	U	YELLOW		R	YELLOW	START	P	YELLOW	START	–	–	–	(U)	25	R, P
(38)	X	YELLOW	START	7	YELLOW	START	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	R, P, X, 7
(39)	X	RED		7	RED		–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	R, P, X, 7
(40)	X	AQUA		7	AQUA		R	AQUA		–	–	–	(X+7)	27	R, P, X, 7
(41)	P	GREEN		R	GREEN		Z	GREEN	START	–	–	–	(R)	28	Z, P
(42)	P	RED		W	RED	START	5	RED	START	–	–	–	(P)	29	Z, 5, W
(43)	K	PURPLE	START	Z	PURPLE		M	PURPLE	START	–	–	–	–	–	Z, 5, W, K, M
(44)	K	RED		–	–	–	M	RED		–	–	–	–	–	Z, 5, W, K, M
(45)	W	YELLOW		Z	YELLOW		M	YELLOW		–	–	–	(Z+M)	31	W, 5, K
(46)	W	AQUA		V	AQUA (1)	START	–	–	–	–	–	–	(W)	32	5, K, V
(47)	CUT	CASE		–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	5, K, V
(48)	V	AQUA (2)		V	AQUA (3)		E	AQUA (1)	START	CUT	CASE	##	(V)	33	5, K, E
(49)	SCORE	CASE		SCORE	CASE		E	AQUA (2)		K	AQUA		(E)	34	K, E
(50)	K	BLIND		5	BLIND		–	–	–	–	–	–	(K+5)	36	–
(51)	SILVER	BOOKLET	C	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
													THE END		
(52)	COLLATE	ALPHABET		–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	
(53)	DOCUMENT	ALPHABET		–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	
(54)	COLLATE	ALPHABET		–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	
(55)	SCORE	CASE		CUT	ALPHABET		–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	
(56)	CUT	ALPHABET		–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	
(57)	SPUDNIK			PRINT	CASE	SILVER	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	
(58)	SPUDNIK			PRINT	CASE	BLACK	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	
(59)	UIC				FOLD CASE			GLUE CASE		–	–	–	–	–	
(60)	UIC			PRINT	BOOKLET		–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	
(61)	UIC			FOLD	BOOKLET		STAPLE	BOOKLET		CUT	BOOKLET		–	–	

PROJECT BUDGET

EXPENSE	DESCRIPTION	PROVIDER	LINK	UNITS	Price Per Unit	PRICE ($)
EQUIPMENT	Mayouko 16 Compartments Detachable Toolbox Organizer	Amazon	https://www.amazon.com/Mayou	2	25	50
EQUIPMENT	Carson LumiLoupe 10x	Amazon	https://www.amazon.com/Carson	1	10	10
EQUIPMENT	Scor-Pal Scoring Board, 12" by 12", 1/8" Space Grooves	Amazon	https://www.amazon.com/Scor-P	1	30	30
EQUIPMENT	Anytime Tools 1" Digital Outside Micrometer	Amazon	https://www.amazon.com/Anytim	1	55	55
EQUIPMENT	Core Servo AxiDraw	Bantam Tools	https://store.bantamtools.com/pr	1	83	83
EQUIPMENT	Large Insulated Food Delivery Backpack	Amazon	https://www.amazon.com/PX-92	1	100	100
EQUIPMENT	Ultrasonic Cleaner Machine	Amazon	https://www.amazon.com/dp/B0	1	65	65
EQUIPMENT	Mitutoyo Digital Caliper	Amazon	https://www.amazon.com/Mituto	1	126	126
SUPPLIES	Lego Bricks	BrickLink	https://www.bricklink.com/v2/mai	1	155	155
SUPPLIES	Lego Bricks	BrickLink	https://www.bricklink.com/v2/mai	1	63	63
SUPPLIES	Lego Bricks	BrickLink	https://www.bricklink.com/v2/mai	1	40	40
SUPPLIES	Lego Bricks	BrickLink	https://www.bricklink.com/v2/mai	1	335	335
SUPPLIES	Lego Grey Baseplates (15')	Amazon	https://www.amazon.com/gp/pro	12	12	144
SUPPLIES	Phenolic Baltic Birch Plywood (Black) 12x12" 3/4inch	MakerStock	https://makerstock.com/products	8	8.5325	68.26
SUPPLIES	Mixed PMS colors (Blends) 8oz Tin	Southern Ink	https://southern-ink.com/mixed-p	5	45	225
SUPPLIES	Portfolio Case 18x24	Blick	https://www.dickblick.com/items/	1	71	71
SUPPLIES	Lego Clear Baseplates	Amazon	https://www.amazon.com/Mindfl	1	30	30
SUPPLIES	Mixed PMS colors (Blends) 8oz Tin	Southern Ink	https://southern-ink.com/mixed-p	1	150	150
SUPPLIES	#2 Can Transparent White + Empty Containers	Southern Ink	https://southern-ink.com/mixed-p	1	71	71
SUPPLIES	Silver 8oz Tin	Southern Ink	https://southern-ink.com/letterpre	1	57	57
SUPPLIES	Mat Board Center, 12"x12" Crystal Clear Sleeves, 100 Pack	Amazon	https://www.amazon.com/dp/B0	10	18	180
SUPPLIES	1/4 x 1/32 Inch Neodymium Rare Earth Disc Magnet N52	KJ Magnetics	https://www.kjmagnetics.com/pl	300	0	84
SUPPLIES	1/4 Inch Small Steel Disc, Blank Metal Strike Plates (300 Pack)	Total Elements	https://totalelement.com/collectio	2	24	48
PAPER	Neenah Astrobright Eclipse Black 12x18" 65#C 176 gsm	Neenah	https://globalin.com/product.cfm?i	800	0.41	328
PAPER	Mohawk Superfine Eggshell White 100#T	Mohawk	https://globalin.com/product.cfm?i	12000	0.19165	2299.8
PAPER	11" x 17" Laser Transparency Film	Amazon	https://www.amazon.com/CHP-F	3	18	54
PAPER	Sirio Ultra Black 137 lbs / 371 gsm Custom Cut to 28.3 x 20.1 fo	Fedrigoni	https://globalin.com/product.cfm?i	100	5.9679	596.79
PAPER	Neenah Astrobright Eclipse Black 60 lb / 89 gsm Custom Cut to	Neenah	https://globalin.com/product.cfm?i	100	1.5435	154.35
ACRYLIC	Acrylic (Clear)	MakerStock	https://makerstock.com/products	1	80.15	80.15
ACRYLIC	Acrylic (Clear) 1/2 inch	MakerStock	https://makerstock.com/products	1	116.4	116.4
PAPER	Mohawk Superfine Smooth UltraWhite 24#W	Mohawk	https://globalin.com/product.cfm?i	1	120	120
PAPER	Mohawk Superfine Eggshell UltraWhite 70#T	Mohawk	https://globalin.com/product.cfm?i	1	732.66	732.66
BINDER	Dunwell 12x12 Portfolio Binder	Amazon	https://www.amazon.com/gp/pro	25	18	439.5
LABOR	Letterpress Specialist	UIC	–	1	5,000	5000
LABOR	Letterpress Specialist	External	–	1	6,750	6750
EXHIBITION	American Plastic Bricks	eBay	https://ebay.com/	1	28	28
EXHIBITION	American Bricks Wood	eBay	https://ebay.com/	1	52	52
EXHIBITION	Kiddicraft Letter Set	eBay	https://ebay.com/	1	50	50
EXHIBITION	Build-O-Brick Flyer	eBay	https://ebay.com/	1	22	22
EXHIBITION	MiniBrix	eBay	https://ebay.com/	1	38	38
EXHIBITION	Lego Mursten	eBay	https://ebay.com/	1	136	158
EXHIBITION	MS 12x12 Front Loading Tabletop/Wall Picture Frame, Black	Walmart	https://www.walmart.com/ip/MS-	50	4	200
EXHIBITION	Lego Kiddicraft	eBay	https://ebay.com/	1	230	230
EVENT	Hamilton New Impressions Submission	Hamilton Type	https://woodtype.org/pages/new-	1	30	30
EVENT	AIGA Paper Show VIP Ticket	AIGA	https://www.eventbrite.com/e/20	1	55.2	55.2
BOOK	For the Love of the Letterpress	Amazon	https://www.amazon.com/dp/135	1	25	29
BOOK	General Printing: An Illustrated Guide to Letterpress Printing	Amazon	https://www.amazon.com/Gener	1	30	30
BOOK	Emil Ruder Typographie	Amazon	https://www.amazon.com/Typogr	1	55	55
						19889.11

	2024			2025									
	October	November	December	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October
1													
2													
3													
4										CHI to BSL			
5													
6													
7													
8								FINALS					
9													
10	TEST COLORS 1												
11													
12													
13													
14													
15													
16				TEST COLORS FINAL									
17													
18													
19													
20													
21													
22		TEST COLORS 2											
23				START (1)									
24	TEST COLORS 3												
25													
26													
27													
28				(2)									
29													
30				(3)									
31													



N° of bricks used per LEGO® shape:

1-1-corners: 71
1-1-corner: 930
1-1-circle: 460
1-1-square: 2212
1-2-circle: 123
1-2-rect: 326
1-2-grill: 592
1-2-corner: 291
2-2-circle: 73
2-2-square: 361
2-2-curve: 355
2-2-triangle: 260
2-2-arrow: 332
2-2-corner: 95
2-2-corner-cut: 111
2-2-circle-hole: 140
3-3-curve: 125
3-3-circle: 57
1-3-rect: 179
2-4-rect: 184
2-4-rect-round: 31
4-4-curve: 122
1-4-rect: 230
1-6-rect: 82
1-8-rect: 209

	LAYER 1	LAYER 2	LAYER 3	L	Print Run	Passes	Time
						Press	Hours
CASE	Silver	Black	–	2	250	500	5
BOOKLET	Silver	–	–	1	400	400	6
A	Purple	Green	Aqua	3	250	750	7.5
B	Red	Green	Purple	3	250	750	7.5
C	Red	Aqua	Yellow	3	275	825	8.25
D	Red	Yellow	–	2	275	550	5.5
E	Aqua	Aqua	Aqua	3	275	825	8.25
F	Red	Green	Purple	3	275	825	8.25
G	Red	Yellow	Aqua	3	275	825	8.25
H	Aqua	Purple	Green	3	275	825	8.25
I	Green	Purple	–	2	200	400	4
J	Yellow	Aqua	–	2	275	550	5.5
K	Red	Aqua	Purple	3	275	825	8.25
L	Red	Aqua	Yellow	3	275	825	8.25
L	Red	–	Yellow	2	275	550	5.5
M	Red	Yellow	Purple	3	275	825	8.25
N	Red	Purple	Yellow	3	275	825	8.25
O	Yellow	Aqua	Red	3	275	825	8.25
P	Red	Green	Yellow	3	275	825	8.25
Q	Purple	–	–	1	275	275	2.75
R	Aqua	Yellow	Green	3	275	825	8.25
S	Red	Purple	–	2	275	550	5.5
T	Red	Purple	Green	3	275	825	8.25
U	Red	Aqua	Yellow	3	275	825	8.25
V	Aqua	Aqua	Aqua	3	275	825	8.25
W	Red	Aqua	Yellow	3	275	825	8.25
X	Red	Red	Red	3	275	825	8.25
Y	Red	Green	Yellow	3	275	825	8.25
Z	Purple	Green	Yellow	3	275	825	8.25
0	Red	Aqua	Yellow	3	275	825	8.25
1	Red	Aqua	Yellow	3	275	825	8.25
2	Aqua	–	–	1	175	175	1.75
3	Red	Purple	–	2	275	550	5.5
4	Green	Aqua	Purple	3	275	825	8.25
5	Red	–	Blind	2	275	550	5.5
6	Aqua	Red	–	2	275	550	5.5
7	Aqua	Red	Yellow	3	275	825	8.25
8	Red	Green	–	2	275	550	5.5
9	Red	Aqua	–	2	275	550	5.5
TOTAL				100	10600	27175	273.75
				LAYERS	SHEETS OF PAPER	PASSES ON THE PRESS	ESTIMATED HOURS

N° of bricks used in each individual letter → Total amount of bricks per color.

A : 207 bricks → 67 Aqua, 74 Green, Ø Red, 66 Purple and Ø Yellow.

B : 51 bricks → Ø Aqua, 5 Green, 3 Red, 43 Purple and Ø Yellow.

C : 103 bricks → 43 Aqua, Ø Green, 33 Red, Ø Purple and 27 Yellow.

D : 1024 bricks → Ø Aqua, Ø Green, 512 Red, Ø Purple and 512 Yellow.

E : 955 bricks → 955 Aqua, Ø Green, Ø Red, Ø Purple and Ø Yellow.

F : 121 bricks → Ø Aqua, 57 Green, 32 Red, 32 Purple and Ø Yellow.

G : 301 bricks → 99 Aqua, Ø Green, 132 Red, Ø Purple and 70 Yellow.

H : 84 bricks → 27 Aqua, 19 Green, Ø Red, 38 Purple and Ø Yellow.

I : 226 bricks → Ø Aqua, 97 Green, Ø Red, 129 Purple and Ø Yellow.

J : 282 bricks → 98 Aqua, Ø Green, Ø Red, Ø Purple and 184 Yellow.

K : 18 bricks → 6 Aqua, Ø Green, 6 Red, 6 Purple and Ø Yellow.

L : 243 bricks → 105 Aqua, Ø Green, 30 Red, Ø Purple and 108 Yellow.

M : 327 bricks → Ø Aqua, Ø Green, 89 Red, 159 Purple and 79 Yellow.

N : 229 bricks → Ø Aqua, Ø Green, 26 Red, 119 Purple and 84 Yellow.

O : 272 bricks → 18 Aqua, Ø Green, 21 Red, Ø Purple and 233 Yellow.

P : 241 bricks → Ø Aqua, 47 Green, 142 Red, Ø Purple and 52 Yellow.

Q : 456 bricks → Ø Aqua, Ø Green, Ø Red, 456 Purple and Ø Yellow.

R : 197 bricks → 78 Aqua, 64 Green, Ø Red, Ø Purple and 55 Yellow.

S : 49 bricks → Ø Aqua, Ø Green, 24 Red, 25 Purple and Ø Yellow.

T : 227 bricks → Ø Aqua, 117 Green, 18 Red, 92 Purple and Ø Yellow.

U : 74 bricks → 16 Aqua, Ø Green, 40 Red, Ø Purple and 18 Yellow.

V : 125 bricks → 125 Aqua, Ø Green, Ø Red, Ø Purple and Ø Yellow.

W : 305 bricks → 71 Aqua, Ø Green, 192 Red, Ø Purple and 42 Yellow.

X : 118 bricks → 45 Aqua, Ø Green, 41 Red, Ø Purple and 32 Yellow.

Y : 243 bricks → Ø Aqua, 116 Green, 6 Red, Ø Purple and 121 Yellow.

Z : 197 bricks → Ø Aqua, 66 Green, Ø Red, 72 Purple and 59 Yellow.

0 : 325 bricks → 102 Aqua, Ø Green, 148 Red, Ø Purple and 75 Yellow.

1 : 453 bricks → 188 Aqua, Ø Green&Purple, 101 Red and 164 Yellow.

2 : 86 bricks → 86 Aqua, Ø Green, Ø Red, Ø Purple and Ø Yellow.

3 : 140 bricks → Ø Aqua, Ø Green, 132 Red, 8 Purple and Ø Yellow.

4 : 294 bricks → 102 Aqua, 128 Green, Ø Red, 64 Purple and Ø Yellow.

5 : 176 bricks → Ø Aqua&Green&Purple&Yellow, 120 Red and 56 Blind.

6 : 73 bricks → 58 Aqua, Ø Green, 15 Red, Ø Purple and Ø Yellow.

7 : 38 bricks → 9 Aqua, Ø Green, 11 Red, Ø Purple and 18 Yellow.

8 : 450 bricks → Ø Aqua, 221 Green, 229 Red, Ø Purple and Ø Yellow.

9 : 88 bricks → 44 Aqua, Ø Green, 44 Red, Ø Purple and Ø Yellow.

DATA

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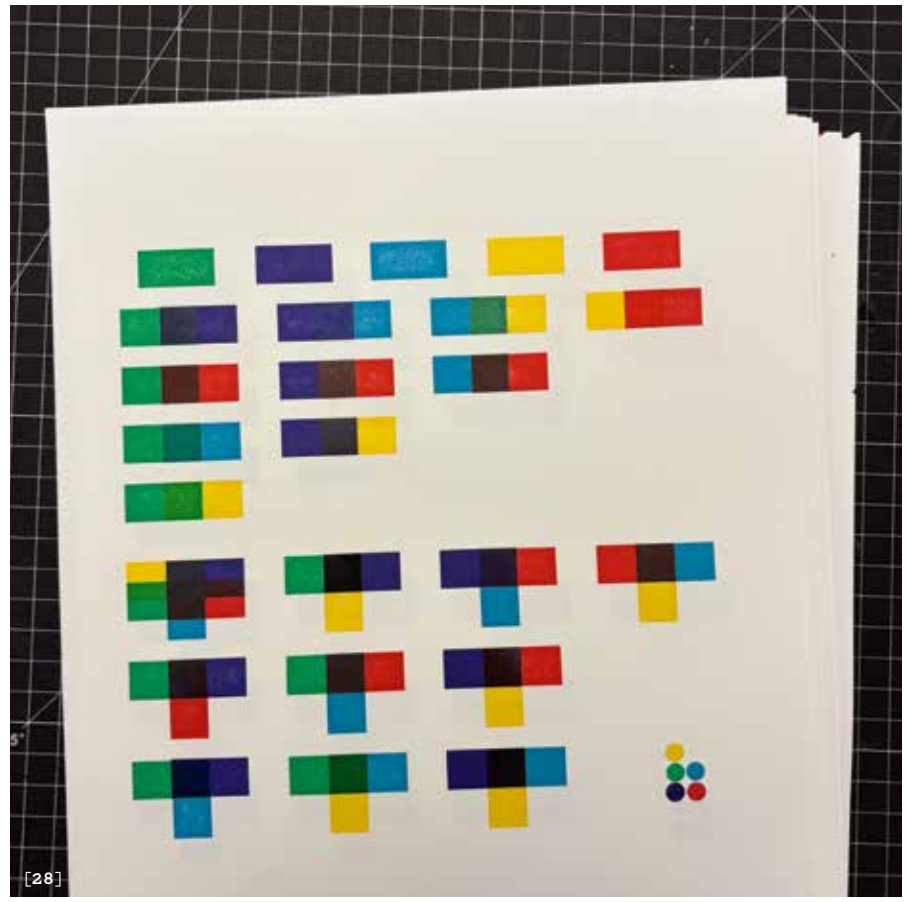
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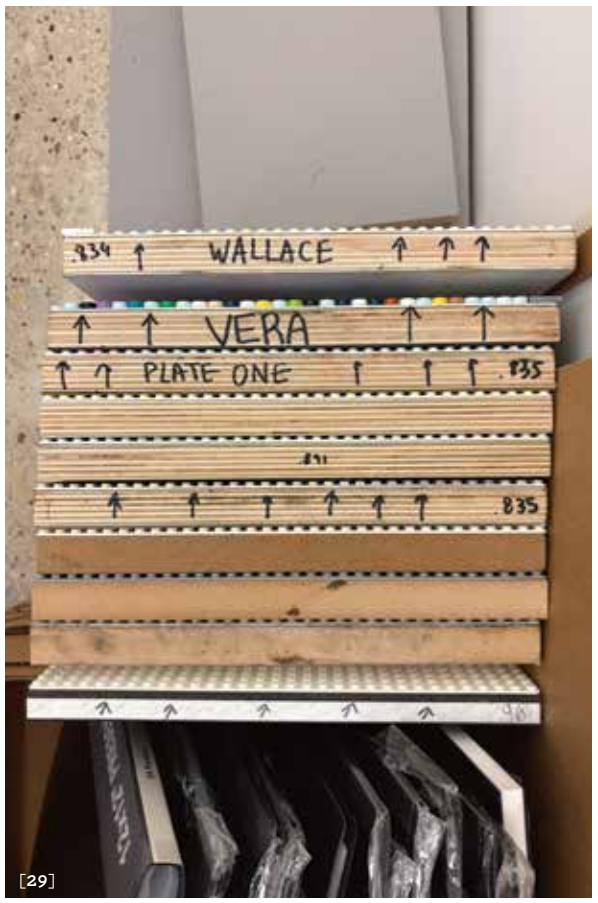

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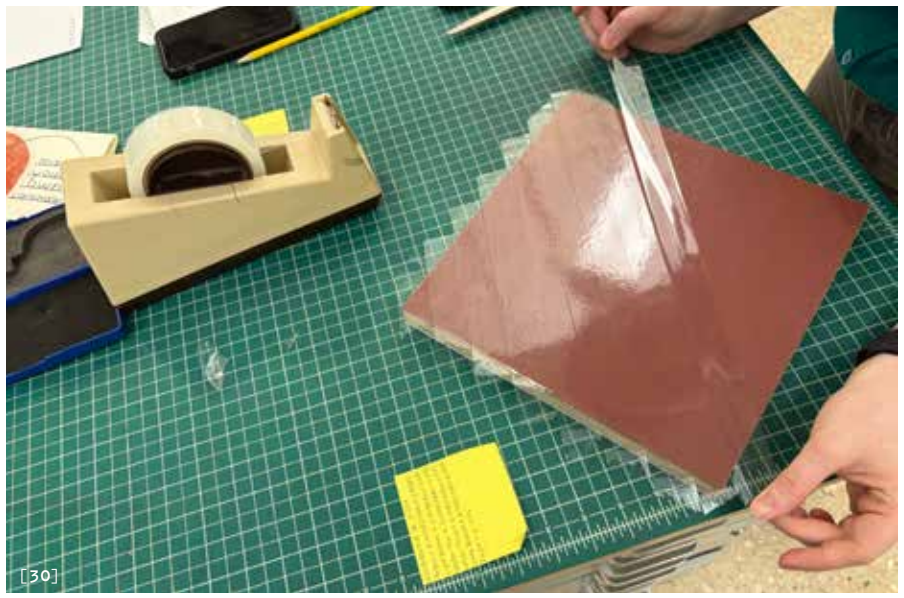
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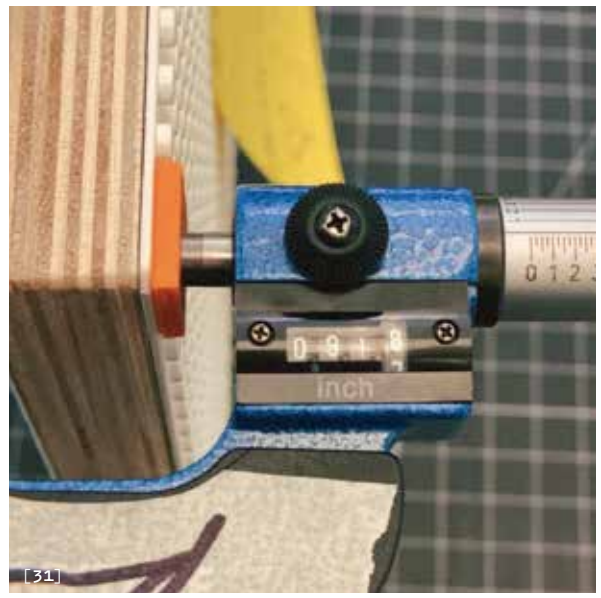

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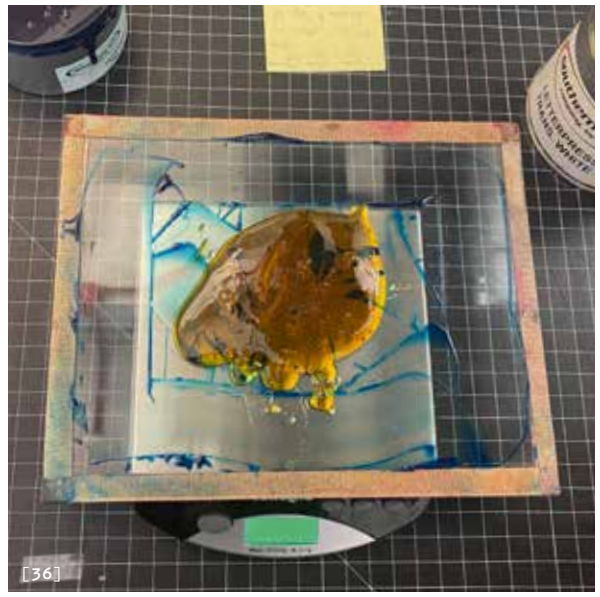
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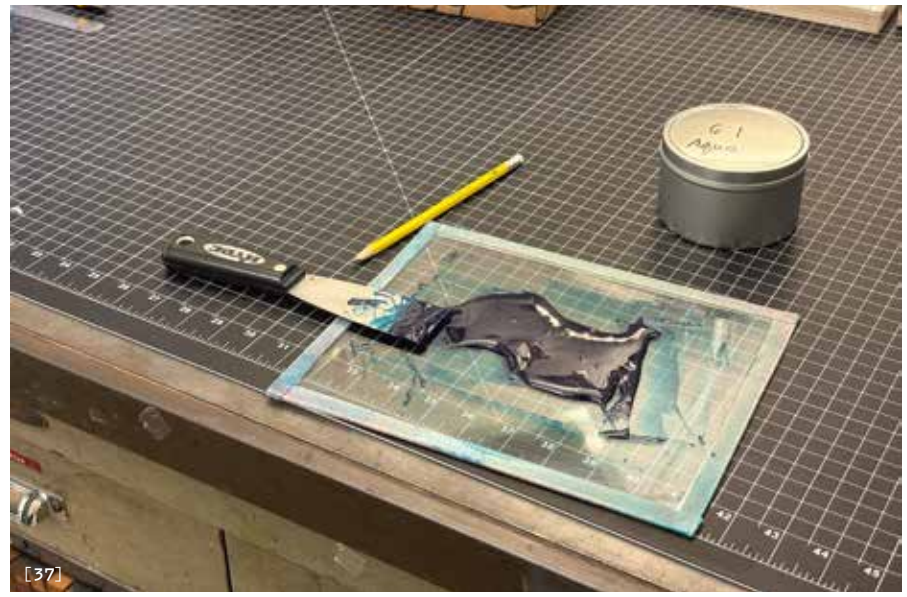
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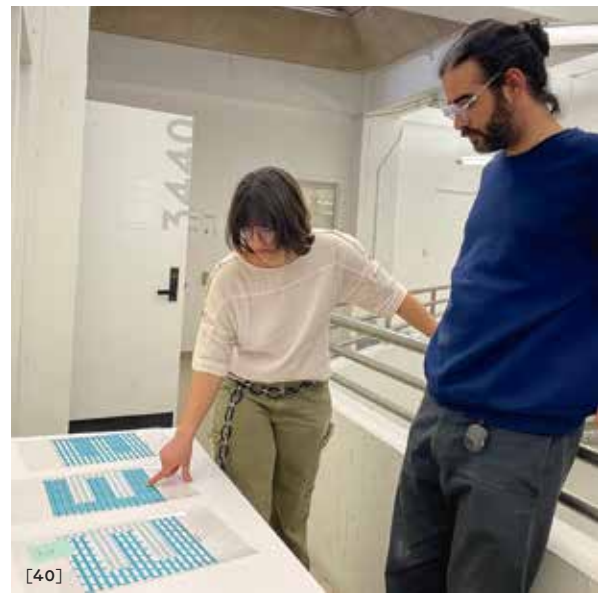
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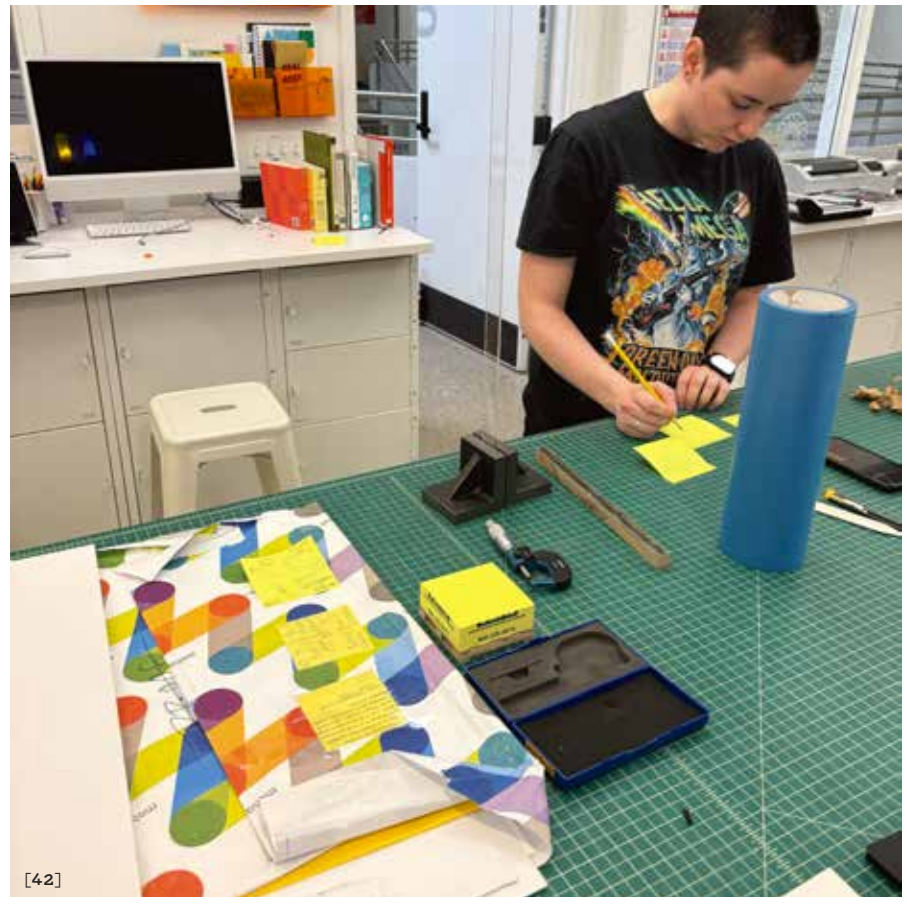
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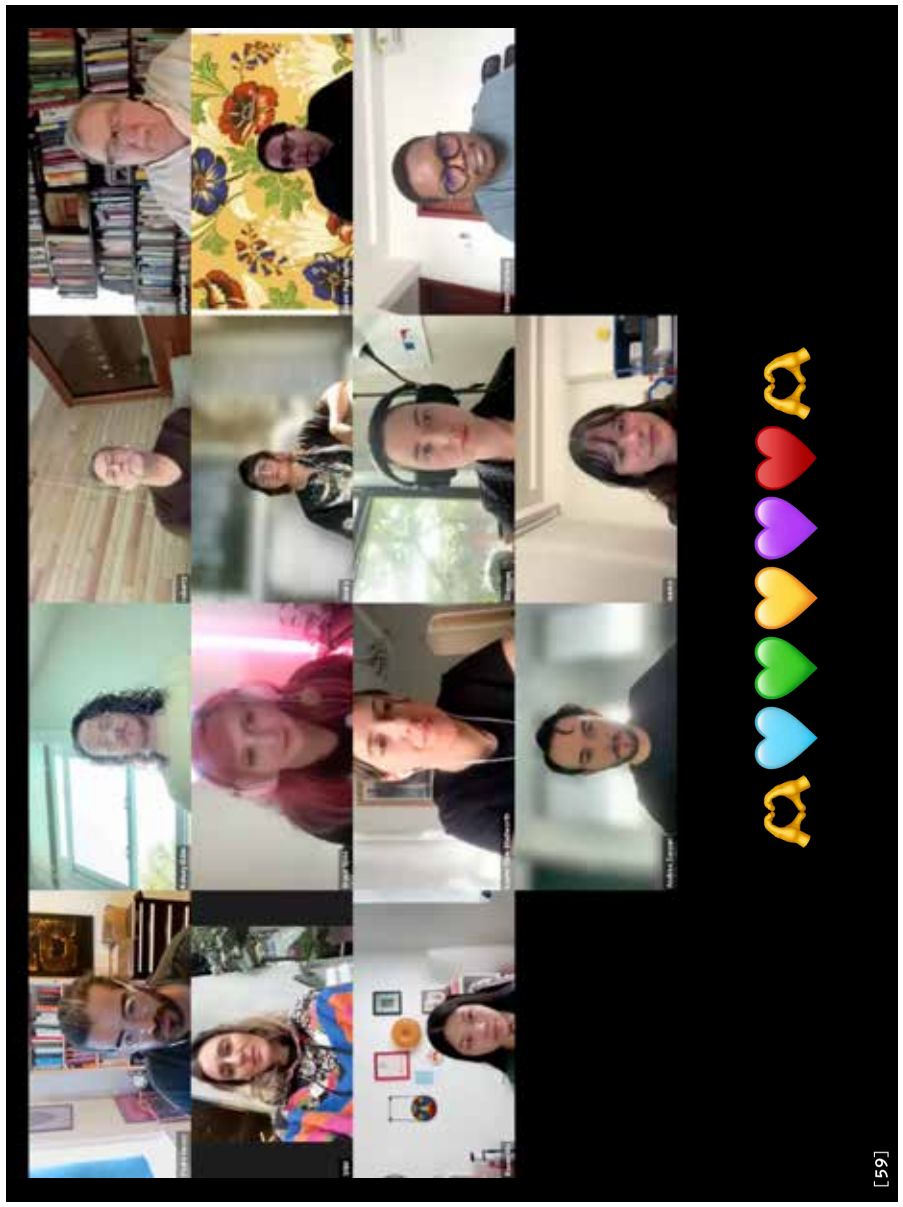

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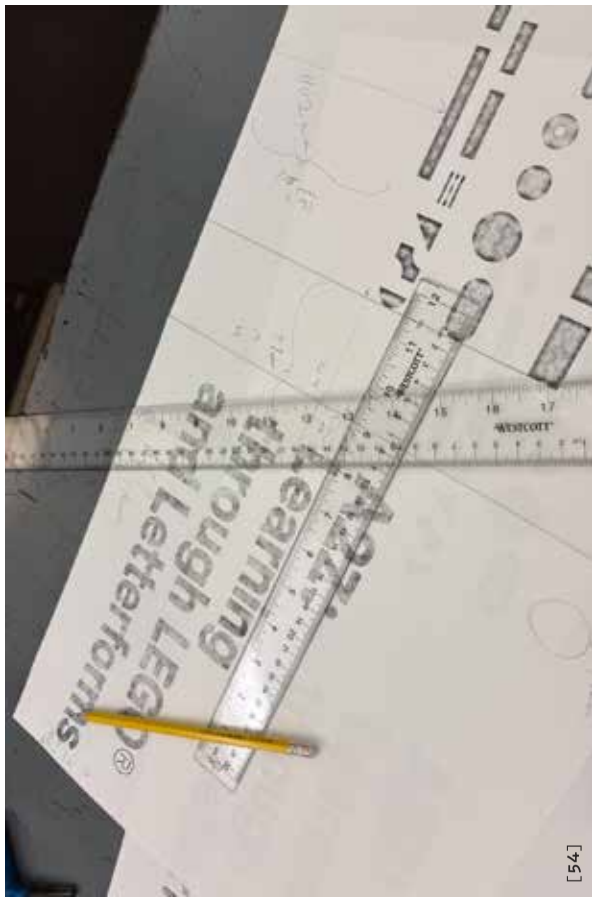

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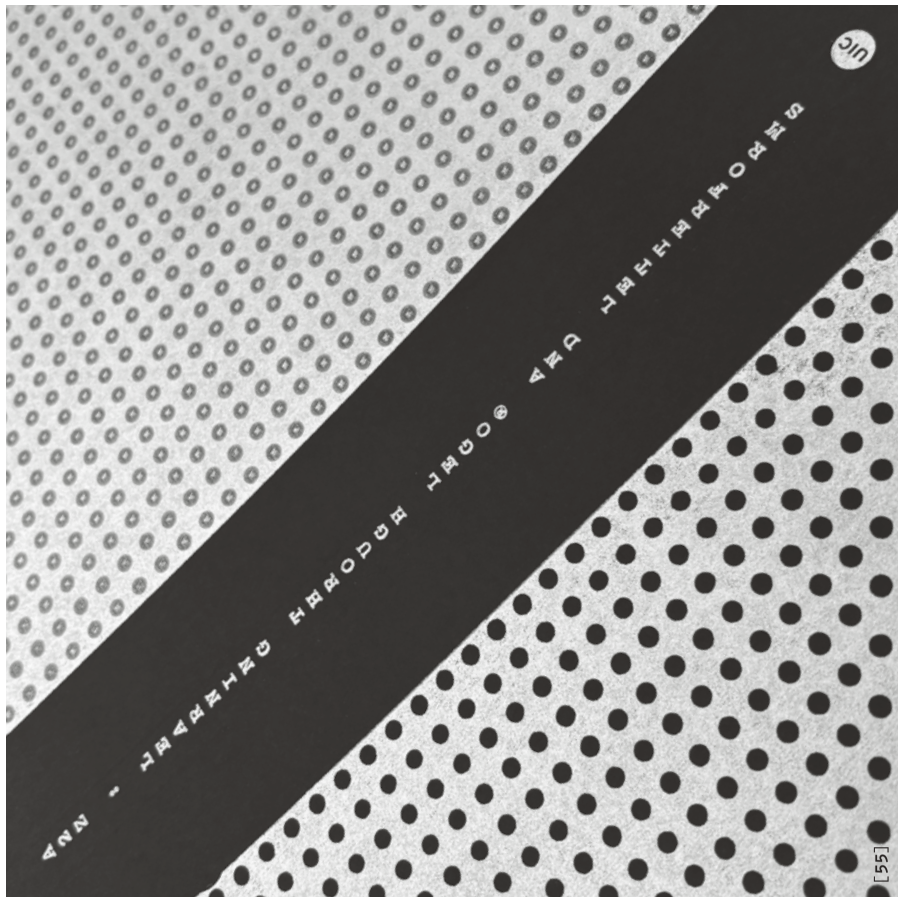

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[**ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**]

A very special thank you to Amira Hegazy and Daniel Mellis for all the printing expertise, to Shannon Morrissey for the dedication and hard work, and to Madeleine Aguilar for the constant support and high spirits around this project.

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Cover
Letterpress Silver Ink (PMS 877) on a Vandercook Universal I
Interior
Digital Printing on a Canon ImageRunner Advance C5860i
Case
Letterpress Silver Ink (PMS 877) + Black on a Vandercook SP-25

Typefaces
Theinhardt by Optimo.ch (https://optimo.ch/typefaces/theinhardt)
Pitch by Klim Type (https://klim.co.nz/retail-fonts/pitch/)

Paper
Cover: Neenah Astrobrights Eclipse Black 60#T
Interior: Mohawk Superfine Ultrawhite Eggshell 70#T
Alphabet: Mohawk Superfine White Eggshell with i-Tone 100#T
Case: Fedrigoni Sirio Ultra Black 137#C

This project was supported in part by funding from the University of Illinois Chicago 2024 Awards for Creative Activity Program.

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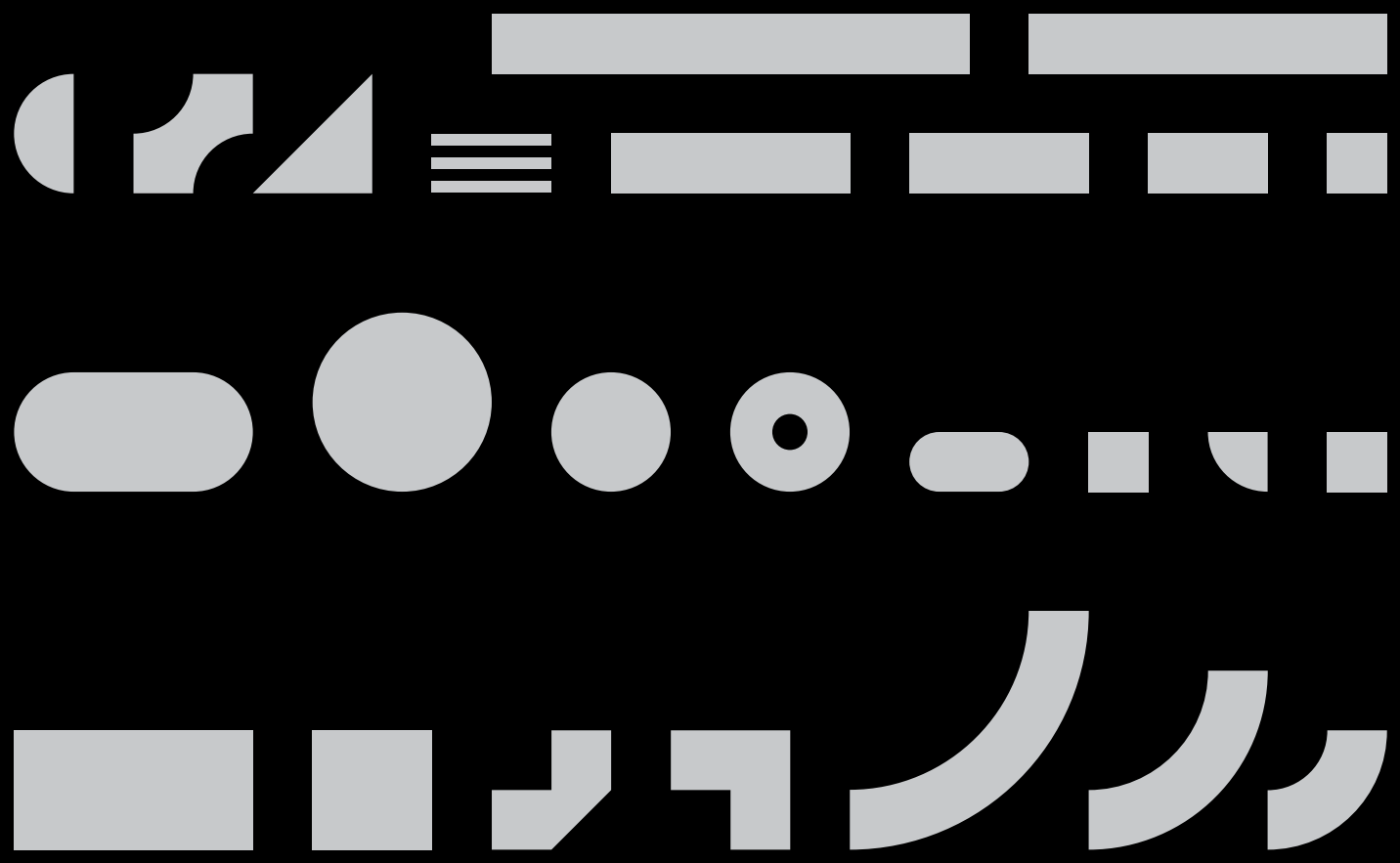
[**ABOUT THE AUTHOR**]

Pedro Neves is a designer and educator specializing in the use of algorithms and code to generate printed matter, digital interactive data visualizations, and other web-related technologies. Currently Clinical Assistant Professor in the UIC School of Design, Neves also serves as Design Faculty Lead for the BS in Computer Science + Design offered by the UIC College of Engineering in collaboration with the School of Design.

His scholarly research and professional practice interrogate and explore the relationships between traditional and contemporary design processes in both analogue and digital formats, and he has shared his work in exhibitions and presentations around the world. Neves frames his teaching as a highly collaborative endeavor, and he regularly introduces students to his own research projects.

Teaching across levels within the School of Design, from intermediate and advanced undergraduate studios to graduate studios and advising, he structures assignments as playgrounds for experimentation and testing new ideas, with the aim of inspiring students' curiosity and helping them understand the design environments they most enjoy.

After earning a Bachelor's in Design and Multimedia at the University of Coimbra, Portugal, Neves worked for Studio Dobra in Porto and 2×4 in New York. He earned his Master of Design at UIC and Master of Advanced Studies in Graphic Design at The Basel School of Design, FHNW/HGK Switzerland.



[**1**] Spring 2022 DES511 mid-term presentation poster designed for the class;
[**2**] Instagram post sharing the serendipitous finding of type-high by attaching a LEGO® baseplate to a 3/4inch MDF base (06/05/2023);
[**3**] Diverse DES511 LEGO® + Typography assignments;
[**4**] Spring 2022 DES511 mid-term exhibition presentation;
[**5**] Students printing with a Provisional Press;
[**6**] Spring 2022 DES511 Student Work; Top Row: Gannon Novak, Joey Nottoli, Zixuan Chen; Bottom row: Zixuan Chen, Austin Watson, Quentin Bu; Complete Alphabet: Hyein Chung;
[**7**] Spring 2023 DES511 Student Work; From left to right: Emma Dwyer, Hailee Talbot, Jarin Moriguchi, Lauren Covey, Michelle Hernandez, Raeann Van Zee;
[**8**] Collaborative typesetting: “How many designers do we need to change the leading of a paragraph?”;
[**9**] Spring 2024 DES511 collaborative poetry poster;
[**10**] Students printing with a Provisional Press;
[**11**] 2024 UIC Winter Show LEGO® + Type exhibition;
[**12**] LEGO® + Type print;
[**13**] LEGO® + Type Print on stage at TypeCon 2023;
[**14**] TypeCon presentation—Portland, OR. August 2023;
[**15**] ATypI post-conference hangout with Strong Arm Press (Clint Harvey), Brisbane, Australia. April 2024;
[**16**] ATypI Presentation in Brisbane, Australia. April 2024;
[**17**] 2024 Award for Creative Activity Proposal Title Page;
[**18**] Interview article featured at UIC Today. July 2024;
[**19**] LEGO® letterpress print developed during the UIC Today interview to announce the collaborative/collective alphabet;
[**20**] Prompt sent to each designer as an invitation to be a part of the project;
[**21**] Digital InDesign template simulating the physical LEGO® baseplate and individual bricks;
[**22**] Final color selection and layer structure for the design of each letterform;
[**23**] UIC’s Print Lab Vandercook Universal I proofing press used in this project;

[**THE ALPHABET**]

[**A**] Transparent film used to guide placement of the LEGO® bricks;
[**B**] One layer of the letter B printed;
[**C**] Proofing the C with registration 2×2 LEGO® bricks;
[**D**] Reviewing both layers of the letter D printed;
[**E**] The roller often picked up loose LEGO® bricks. These had to be secured with double sided tape onto the baseplate;
[**F**] Fabian Harb and Otto Paim exploring designs physically with the LEGO® bricks and baseplate;
[**G**] Reviewing printed proofs;
[**H**] Adjusting the letterpress paper grippers;
[**I**] The 1×1 square LEGO® bricks required custom 3D printed bricks, lower in height, to stabilize the LEGO® bricks from twisting during printing;
[**J**] LEGO® bricks arranged on the baseplate inked with aqua;
[**K**] Poem by Katharine Wolff;
[**L**] LEGO® bricks arranged on the baseplate for the aqua layer;
[**M**] Close up of M design highlighting registration of the three layers;
[**N**] Baseplate plate arranged with LEGO® bricks for registering the yellow layer;
[**O**] Re-inking the press between pulls for the yellow layer;
[**P**] Measuring the printed proof for registration;
[**Q**] Close up of an experimental print of the Q, by shifting the paper sideways and doing multiple passes on the press;
[**R**] Larger bricks with more flat surface area required the use of makereadies to even out application pressure—this particular method of using an x-acto knife directly on the drum of the press is highly discouraged;
[**S**] LEGO® letterform design party;
[**T**] Each LEGO® brick, to be used for printing each layer, had to be placed individually. One of the advantages of using this system is the ability of reusing bricks from previous prints;
[**U**] Printing the last layer of the letter U;
[**V**] Printing the second of the three aqua layers of the letter V;
[**W**] Jennifer Wandro pulling a print of the yellow layer of her letter W;
[**X**] Daniel Mellis assembling his custom baseplate, that allows bricks to be placed at unconventional angles;
[**Y**] Henrique Nardi and Raven Mo visited UIC and had the opportunity to learn more about the methodology and ideas behind this project. Henrique later contributed with the letter Y;
[**Z**] We adapted a toolbox to label, organize and store the LEGO® bricks;
[**0**] Closeup of the baseplate arranged with LEGO® bricks for the red layer of the number 0;

[**1**] Setting up the baseplate for the aqua layer of the number 1;
[**2**] Proof of the number 2 compared to its baseplate;
[**3**] The red layer of the number 3 inked on the press;
[**4**] Pulling the last layer of the number 4. The dark blue color, seen in this picture as the simulation of an outline stroke of the number, was only possible due to the overprint of two colors, green and purple;
[**5**] The design of the number 5 included a blind emboss and Transparent White ink;
[**6**] Measuring the design registration marks for precise placement on the page;
[**7**] Robert Zolna's watch displaying a proof of his design, after being shared with him during production;
[**8**] D Josh Cook visited the UIC Print Lab and some pulled prints of the green layer of his own number 8;
[**9**] Measuring the registration marks for the aqua layer of the number 9;

[**END OF THE ALPHABET**]

[**24**] After the end of the Spring 2024 semester, we took over a classroom and used it as headquarters for planning, storage and production;
[**25**] Sticky note visual aides on the press, making sure we would pull the necessary amount of prints needed to complete the edition, including some experimental and playful additional ones;
[**26**] A pile of misregistered prints, LEGO® bricks, can of ink and paper;
[**27**] Comparing Pantone color swatches for final color palette selection;
[**28**] Print with final color palette, to help understand overprints and process colors;
[**29**] Collection of custom LEGO® baseplates, raised to type-high (0.918in) that were used to produce the alphabet. These baseplates would wear out, and had to be replaced every so often;
[**30**] Raising the baseplates to type-high is a very detailed and rigorous process. Applying layers of tape to the baseplate step-by-step ensured that we would be able to get to the exact measurements needed;
[**31**] Measuring a baseplate after being adjusted, that would match type-high;
[**32**] Tools regularly used during the printing process: mainly the x-acto to remove bricks from the baseplate and a ruler for all measurements;
[**33**] Reams of paper needed to print the complete alphabet, around 12,000 sheets of paper;
[**34**] All the LEGO® bricks available to use, organized across two toolboxes;
[**35**] Cans of mixed letterpress ink. The solid Pantone colors were mixed with Transparent White at different ratios, to guarantee the correct color and transparency when printing;
[**36**] Weighing Transparent White ink for mixing with Aqua;
[**37**] Aqua ink spread out on the mixing plate, prior to being transferred to the press;
[**38**] Our workstation featuring fresh reams of paper, LEGO® bricks, and ink;
[**39**] Assembling the LEGO® bricks for the red layer of the letter D, using yellow stabilizer custom bricks between each brick to prevent movement;
[**40**] Amira Hegazy and Pedro Neves discussing the printing process of the aqua layers of the letter E;
[**41**] Amira Hegazy printing the purple layer of the letter A;
[**42**] Shannon Morrissey calculating the measurements needed to raise the baseplate to type-high;
[**43**] Daniel Mellis printing the aqua layer of their letter X;
[**44**] Madeleine Aguilar printing the yellow layer of their letter X;
[**45**] Jennifer Wandro printing the yellow layer of her letter W;
[**46**] Amira Hegazy and Shannon Morrissey stretching in between prints. Pulling more than 750 prints a day is a physically demanding task;
[**47**] Amira Hegazy collecting prints after printing the red layer of the letter Y;
[**48**] Shannon Morrissey printing the first aqua layer of the V;
[**49**] D Josh Cook printing the red layer of his number 8;
[**50**] The finished alphabet prints are arranged and ready for collating;
[**51**] During production a small edition of "Everything" prints was made. These prints were a combination of multiple layers from multiple letters and numbers, and can be seen here on the drying rack;
[**52**] Cleaning the press, after printing with Purple;
[**53**] Cutting the letter Y with the guillotine. The original paper was 12"x18", and needed to be cut to a final size of 12"x12";
[**54**] Carbon-copy proof of the booklet cover being measured, to calculate the exact printing furniture needed and its placement;
[**55**] Close-up of the pre-folded book case, printed in Pantone PMS 877;
[**56**] Pedro Neves printing the silver layer of the custom case that contains the final edition of the alphabet. Due to its dimensions, it was printed at Spudnik Press on a Vandercook SP-25;
[**57**] Amira Hegazy measures the height of the rollers at Spudnik Press;
[**58**] Setup for photographing the final prints at Latitude Chicago;
[**59**] A2Z Alphabet Reveal Party Zoom call.