



POLITECNICO MILANO 1863

Facoltà di Design della Comunicazione
Sezione C2
Laboratorio di Fondamenti del Progetto
Anno Accademico 2018-2019

DesignVerso

Una collana dedicata ai designer della comunicazione
immaginata come allegato alla rivista Multiverso,
Università degli Studi di Udine.

Docenti

Prof.ssa Cristina Boeri
Prof.ssa Raffaella Bruno
Prof.ssa Daniela Calabi

Cultori della materia

Designer Monica Fumagalli Illiprandi
Dott. Lorenzo Rabaioli
Dott. Marco Valli

Progetto Grafico

Jacopo Martinalli
Natalija Milenković
Maria Chiara Siddi

EDITORIAL

Doing this project was different in many ways from what we expected. We were focused on reading about Alan Fletcher as much as possible, and turning our knowledge into this magazine issue. Pictures we chose to put inside represent Fletcher as a designer, a great thinker and a completely carefree artist. One might even say genius. Besides our thorough knowledge of Fletcher's work and personal life, we learned the importance of friendship, and more importantly, partnership and group work. Alan Fletcher did all his projects by himself, but in order to give you (readers) a better and clearer vision of who he was, three people were involved in making of the magazine. We still managed to make this project for

you as best as we could, and with all our hearts. We hope that our readers will see the process we had to go through (putting ideas into practice) and that we, most importantly, enjoyed and learned a lot. Magazine is divided into three main sections: Workings of the Hand, Workings of the Eye and Workings of the Brain. First part focuses on Fletcher's passion for calligraphy and written pictures. Second, mainly talks about his thoughts on visual thinking and third, Alan's vivid imagination and mind tricks. The main title of this issue, "A way of thinking", corresponds to his quote "Design is not a thing you do. It's a way of life". The same goes for Alan Fletcher: his opus is not a style. It's a way of thinking.

1

Workings of the Hand

In the beginning was the letter	p. 06-17
Words are labels	p. 18-25
Thinking in ink	p. 26-31

2

Workings of the Eye

The art of looking sideways	p. 32-35
A nomad eye	p. 36-41
I see what you mean	p. 42-43
Kharakter	p. 44-49

3

Workings of the Brain

Imagination is the active ingredient of thinking	p. 50-55
Who are you going to believe, me or your eyes?	p. 56-59
The art of improvisation	p. 60-67

1

Workings of the Hand

by Maria Chiara Siddi

**«Music has seven
letters, writing has
twenty-six notes»**

Joseph Joubert

IN THE BEGINNING WAS THE LETTER

from “The Art of Looking Sideways”, Alan Fletcher, 2001.

The letters of our alphabet are derived from a script invented, or at least developed, by the Phoenicians. Their neighbours, the ancient Greeks, adopted this for their own use and by translating Phoenician letters into Greek, aleph (A) and beth (B) becoming alpha and beta, gave the world the alphabet. 'All characters were originally sign and all signs were once images. Human society, the world, man in his entirety is in the alphabet. Masonry, astronomy, philosophy, all the sciences start here. A is the roof with its rafters and traverse-beam, the arch, or it is like two friends who embrace and shake hands. D is the back, and B is a D on a second D, that is a 'double-back' – the hump; C is the crescent, is the moon, E is the foundation, the pillar and the roof – all architecture contained in a single letter. F is the gallows, the fork, G in the horn, H is the

facade of a building with its two towers, I is the war-machine that throws projectiles, J is the plough, the horn of plenty, K signifies one of the basic laws of geometry (the angle of reflection is equal to the angle of incidence), L is the leg and the foot, M is the mountain, or the camp with its tents, N is the door, closed with a cross-bar, O is the sun, P is the porter carrying a burden, Q is the croup and the tail, R signifies rest, the porter leaning on his stick, S is the snake, T is the hammer, U is the urn, V is the vase (that is why U and V are often confused). I have already said what Y signifies. X signifies crossed swords, combat – who will be victor? Nobody knows – that is why philosophers used 'X' to signify fate, and the mathematicians took it for the unknown. Z is the lightning – is God.' (Victor Hugo.)

a B C D e
F G H I J K
L m n O P
Q R S T U
V W X Y Z

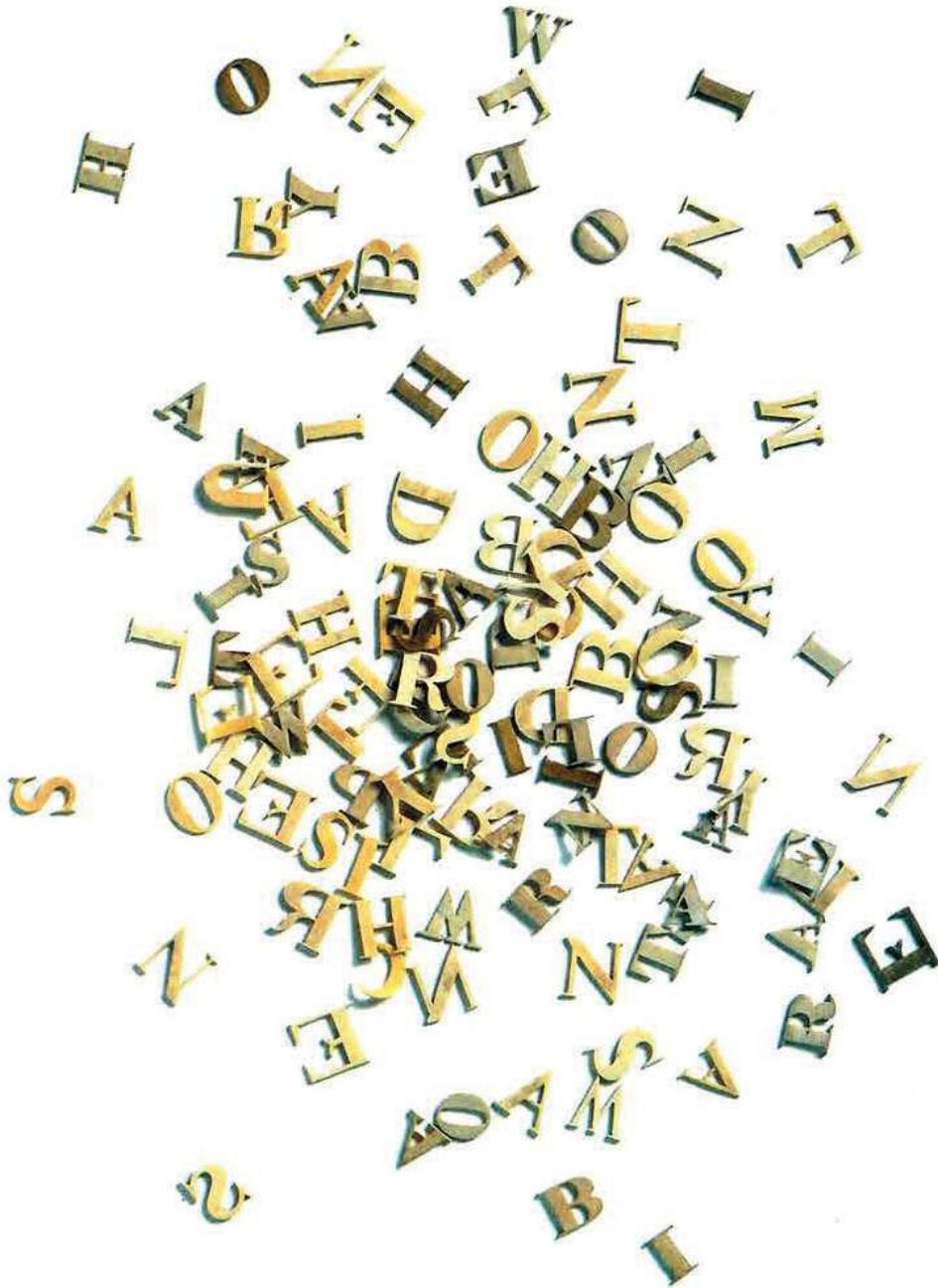
Lattice Letters

In 1692 King Louis of France commissioned the design of the ideal alphabet. I'm not clear whether he had a tidy mind or a desire to monopolize the printed word. Probably both. His designers came up with a square - a square with ambition. The square was divided into a grid of 64 units subdivided into 2,300 tiny squares. The aim was to create a uniform standard set of letters. The alphabet was set out on this lattice so that enlarged or reduced the letters would be proportionately constant. It was a striving for perfection, an idealistic aspiration, and a smart business move. Although the alphabet, named Romain du Roi, anticipated the computer pixel by using a module of squares to structure letters, it still kept the traditional shapes of thick and thin strokes to render them. The grid is employed to preserve the handmade form

of letters, in contrast to the gridfonts shown opposite. Here the grid is used to create letters rather than preserve them. Romain du Roi was engraved on copper plates for exclusive use by the Imprimerie Royale. Use by anybody else constituted a capital offence and a visit to the guillotine. Nowadays for such copyright a commercial corporation would give a right arm... probably yours.

... speaking of earlier fonts, typographer Frederic Goudy said: "The old fellows stole all of our best ideas."





Alphabetic excursion

I like things that express what they say. And DRAWING has a particular opportunity to do what it says. The 26 characters of the ALPHABET can be monogrammed to create all kinds of galaxies. Like the stars at night, some monograms might suggest mythical creatures, others a diagram of a Cubist painting or merely demonstrate geometric callisthenics. The photograph, shown opposite, suggests they could even be an educational tree. Wondering how that ancient Greek decorative device, the MEANDER, might just do that, I had a notion that there would be a calculable number of permutations. Of course there is. It's called Moonshine Conjecture. I'm told it comes to 808,017,424,794,512,875,886,459,904,961,710,757,005,754,368,000,000,000. In addition there are all the styles and techniques in which the letters can be drawn.

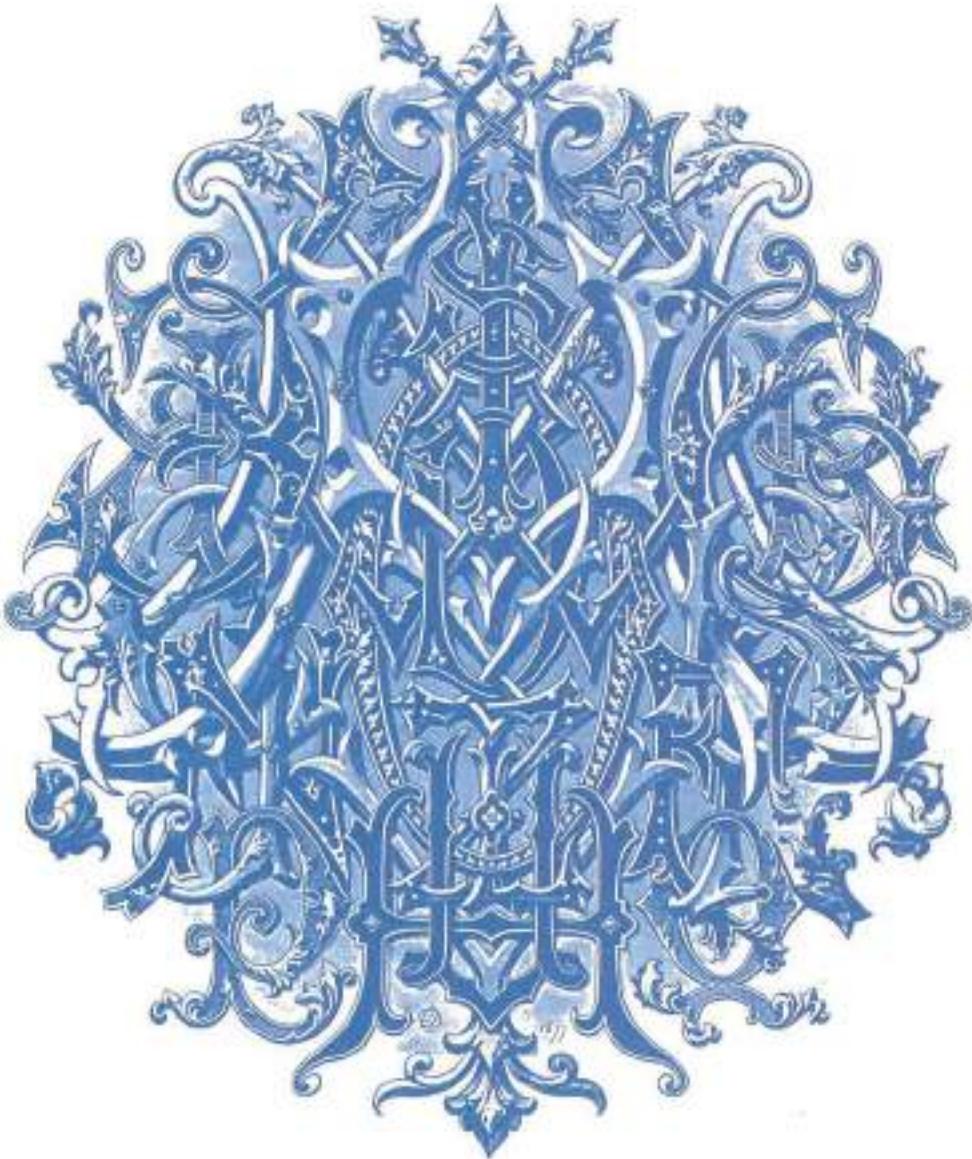
(Alan Fletcher, "Picturing and Poeting", London, Phaidon, 2006)

Drawing of drawings

In drawing the seven letters of the word no rules were followed. The only constraint was to create an entity by superimposition and preserve the recognition value of each letter. The drawings could have ranged in style from the severely geometrical to frivolously free-form. However, these are my first tentative efforts to see where I was going. They show, I think, a naivety not so easy to capture with a more calculated approach.

So here they are.

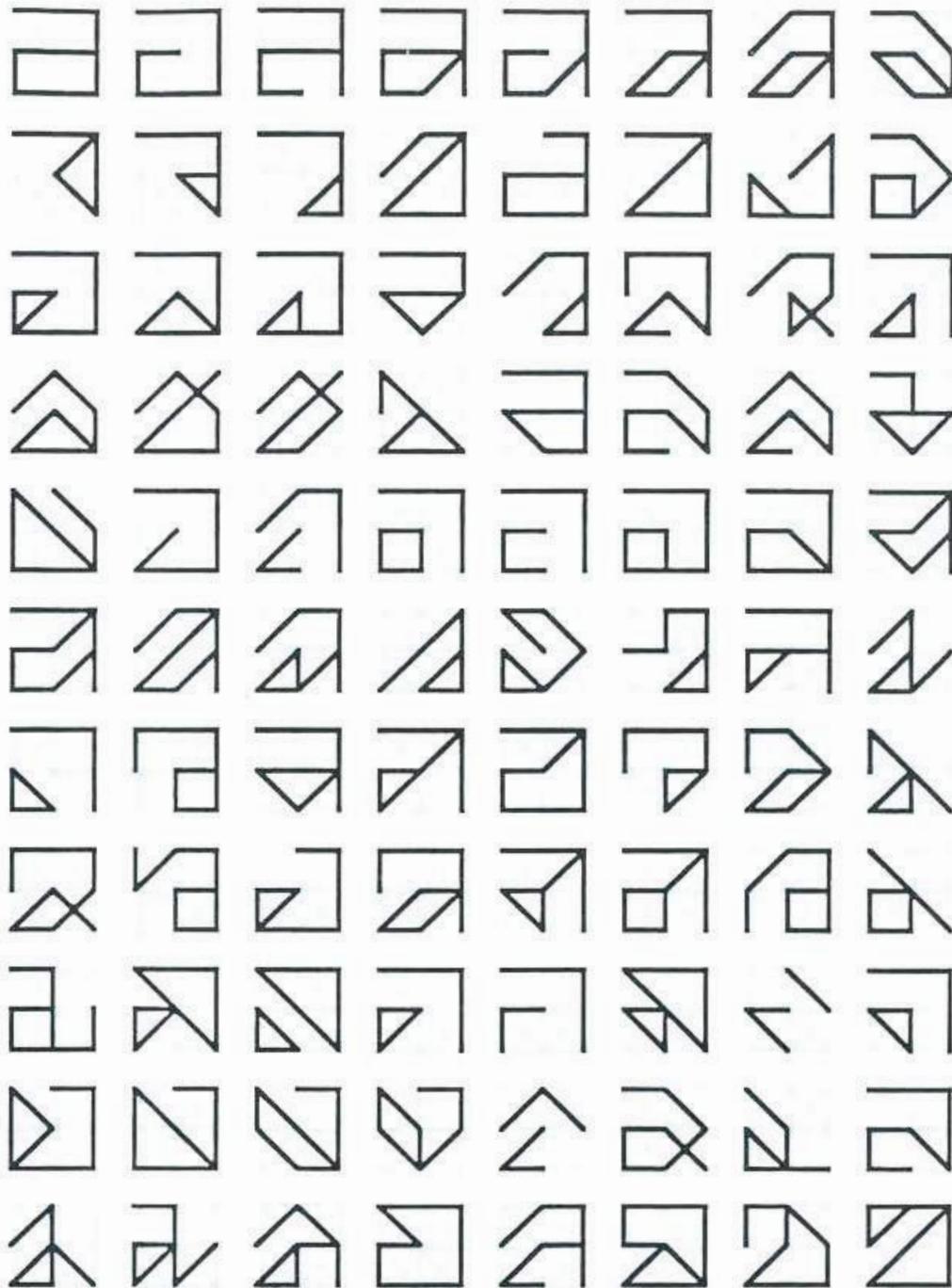
(Alan Fletcher, "Picturing and Poeting", London, Phaidon, 2006)



Monogram of the 26 letters
of the alphabet.

Gridfonts

In the 1970s Douglas Hofstadter (of Pulitzer prize winning *Godel, Escher, Bach*) wrote of the 'Letter Spirit' domain. A region in which mysterious factors endow typefaces with personalities. Where the essence which distinguishes one letter from another becomes distilled to reveal how one 'a' becomes another 'a', or when an 'a' ceases being an 'a' - and loses its personality. When, as he succinctly expressed it: '... a sense of essence, in essence, is, in a sense, the essence of sense, in effect.' To explore the territory of the 'Letter Spirit' domain Hofstadter came up with gridfonts. These are letters constructed on simple matrices, like the one illustrated here, to create numerous versions of letters. In this case 'a'. 'I simply boiled away,' he writes, 'at what I considered to be less interesting aspects of letterforms - I boiled and boiled - until I was left with what might be called the "conceptual skeletons" of letterforms. That is what "gridfonts" are about. There are a huge number of them, and their variety is astounding.' To give some idea of the potential - even using the most basic of grids - this particular version can generate at least 88 different 'a's.



WORDS ARE LABELS

from “The Art of Looking Sideways”, Alan Fletcher, 2001.

Words are labels attached to ideas. The thing is this: if you know the meaning behind a word it can be employed more effectively – much as a wine with a good pedigree invariably carries a better flavour. Pedigree is derived from *pied de grue*, Old French for crane’s foot. It also describes the branching of a business hierarchy or genealogical lineage, diagrams which resemble the wrinkles of a bird’s claw. Origins of words often yield surprises. I usually jot them down on a piece of paper – which I then lose. Here are a few I haven’t: Pupil [eye – not student] comes from pupilla [Latin: doll], the small image which the Romans saw of themselves reflected in each other’s eyes. Fornicate derives from fornix [Latin: arch] and as the colonnades of ancient Rome were frequented by prostitutes – to fornicari was to you know what. Choubiac is Creole for hibiscus,

which [so I’ve read] was used by buccaneers to polish their boots as the sap generated a shiny sheen.

Trumpery is a corruption of trompe d’oeil, an art term for mimicking reality. Tawdry is a contraction of a St Audrey, a district in medieval London where they sold cheap clothes. Rotten Row in Hyde Park owes its name to the Route du Roi. Sautering itinerants in the Middle Ages begged saying they were on their way to La Sainte Terre – the Holy Land. A square meal persists from the days when naval officers were served meals on a square wooden tray. This had a raised lip called the fiddle to prevent the plate slipping off in heavy seas – ‘on the fiddle’ meant you got more on your plate than your due.

Porcelain is circuitously derived from the sheen of cowry shells. At one time a common currency in Africa, shells were called porce as they looked

A
world
vision
element

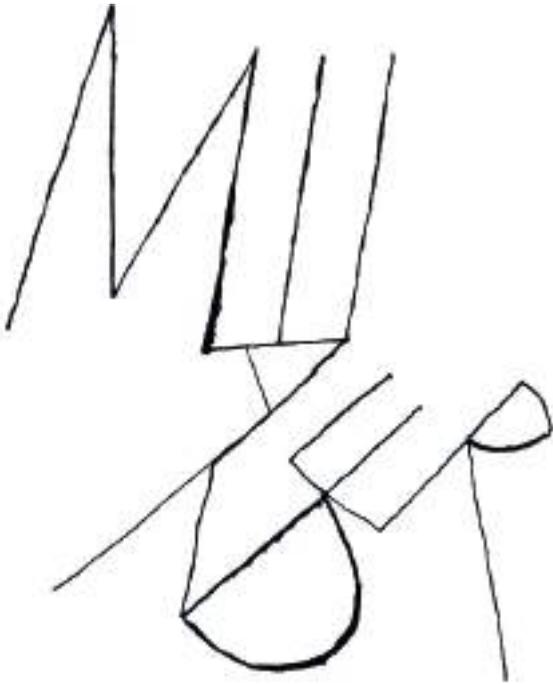
like a sow's genitals. The avocado got its name from the Aztec for testicle, ahuacatl. Meanings can mean something else – it's quite unnerving. No wonder Max Ernst invented an alchemical product – phallustrade – a mischievous verbal collage of phallus, balustrade and autostrada. Lewis Carroll invented chortle by fusing chuckle and snort. Napoleon, the story goes, once stopped at an inn and was served coarse dark bread. Accustomed to the fine baguettes of Paris he ungraciously sneered, 'C'est pain pour Nicole' [Nicole was his horse] which pronounced in English is pumpernickel. This fanciful suggestion by a language maven is less convincing than the view that it's colloquial German for a farting goblin. More happily someone has suggested the word poetry has its roots in Aramaic (the language spoken by Christ) and expresses the sound of water flowing over pebbles. In the fairy story *The Magic of Oz*, by pronouncing the word PYRZOXGL – correctly – one could magically turn oneself into any animal one desires. Shrew or pussy, werewolf or hush puppy, or whatever. Why, I wonder, are there so many sh and gl words for light? Shimmer, shine, shone, sheen. Glimmer, glint, gleam, glitter, glisten, glow, glower. Are so many sl words for unpleasantries like slink, sludge, slurp, slum, sleaze, slime. Xavier Ducoro is an unlikely character in an improbable story which takes place on a train on the London Underground. He has an obsession to turn Bakerloo Line stations into anagrams. He reassembles Waterloo into a Wet





Rolo and Woo later, rearranges Embankment into Met bank men, and morphs Charing Cross from Char crossing to Scotch in rags to Crash so ring C. There are things that have names that I never knew had names. For instance the metal or plastic thing on the end of a shoelace is called aglet. The indent at the bottom of a wine bottle is a kick or a punt. The wire contraption of a lampshade is a harp. The prongs of a fork are tines. Then there are words which other people know and I've never heard of. I took some books on holiday – just your run-of-the-mill-time-out-fodder – the kind of book you only read if you're wearing a seat belt or lying down. Anyway, after I was beach organized and had got into the first one, I hit a roadblock – diegeses. No dictionaries to hand on my desert island, so I noted it down. A few pages on, it happened again - hermeneutics. I wrote that down too. Then suddenly it got out of hand – crepuscular, moidore, modadonic, muniments, syzygy, oleaginous, febrifuge, scilicet, descricials, onomastics, senescence, clerihews, exergues. When I got back home I took down the Shorter Oxford Dictionary [3rd edition] to sort out what meant what. The first page which accidentally fell open announced DILDO on the top left corner of the page. Well I know what that means, but I still took a peek at the definition – I was gobsmacked. DILDO, the dictionary said, 'is a word used in the refrain of ballads' or 'refers to a particular tree or shrub'. Words can't be trusted.





From "Picturing and Poeting",
Alan Fletcher, p. 74

The word is the most common symbol

'Spoken words,' wrote Aristotle, 'are symbols of mental experience.' And 'written words are the symbols of spoken words.' Words are so irrevocably stamped into our psyche they mislead us into thinking that symbolize, are one and the same. We know the word dog doesn't bite, but can be momentarily baffled when we stand up, or our fist when we open our hand. Gunter Grass said words nail down meanings whereas pictures only provide an approximate description. Certainly, there is always the possibility of a mismatch between sign and meaning. When Wittgenstein lay dying the doctor's wife baked him a birthday cake decorated with 'Many Happy Returns'. He thanked her, then asked if she'd thought of the implications. She hadn't. and burst into tears.

Misunderstanding also arise when idiom get in

a twist: One of designer John McConnell's first commissions was a catalogue. The client was pleased with the layouts and John, aware that putting one's name on a job was a step towards establishing a reputation, asked if he could have a credit. The client turned white. 'How much?' he asked. A young Swiss designer came to work in London. The first evening he went out for dinner. He ordered fried potatoes and a 'bloody' steak – direct translation are always tricky. The waiter blinked, wrote down the order, and returned ten minutes later. 'Here', he said, 'is your bloody steak', 'and here' slamming them down, 'are your fucking chips.' Speech has two aspects: the word itself and the pronunciation of the word. And often-quoted example being the Chinese term shi which has 73 different meanings according to how it's pronounced. William Paley,

walking along the beach at Santa Monica with Samuel Goldwyn, noticed a flock of birds circling overhead. 'Look at those gulls', he exclaimed, nudging Goldwyn. Goldwyn peered skyward, looked puzzled, and asked, 'How do you know they're not boys?' How indeed. Looking through a menu in Tokyo I was bewildered to see a 'grass of wine'. Then I got it, recollecting a Japanese designer telling me over supper the previous evening how much he could have a credit. The client turned white. 'How much?' he asked. A young Swiss designer came to work in London. The first evening he went out for dinner. He ordered fried potatoes and a 'bloody' steak – direct translation are always tricky. The waiter blinked, wrote down the order, and returned ten minutes later. 'Here', he said, 'is your bloody steak', 'and here' slamming them down, 'are your fucking chips.' Speech has two aspects: the word itself and the pronunciation of the word. And oft-quoted example being the Chinese term shi which

has 73 different meanings according to how it's pronounced. William Paley, walking along the beach at Santa Monica with Samuel Goldwyn, noticed a flock of birds circling overhead. 'Look at those gulls', he exclaimed, nudging Goldwyn. Goldwyn peered skyward, looked puzzled, and asked, 'How do you know they're not boys?' How indeed. Looking through a menu in Tokyo I was bewildered to see a 'grass of wine'. Then I got it, recollecting a Japanese designer telling me over supper the previous evening how much he'd 'roved lome'. Pronunciation is also an aspect or identity. In an effort to acquire a classy accent Mobster Bugsy Siegel strenuously attempted to eliminate his strident Brooklyn-Jewish accent by tirelessly incanting. 'Twenty dwarves took turns doing handstands on the carpet.' Mercifully he was terminated before he achieved his ambition. The last word goes to playwright Dennis Potter. 'The trouble with words', he wickedly asides, 'is that you never know mouths they've been in.'

“

**When
I choose
a word...
it means
just what
I choose it
to mean...
neither more
nor less.**

”

Humpty Dumpty

THINKING IN INK

from “The Art of Looking Sideways”, Alan Fletcher, 2001.

This has been a very difficult task because the lettering is basically crude and produced by someone unused to using a calligraphic writing instrument and ink or it is, indeed, the writing of an individual who has deep-seated problems. Because this individual chooses to use a calligraphic writing instrument, they are seeking to make an outstanding statement about themselves. Obviously they are interested in the fulfilment of their creative abilities – but these are not the only reasons. This person is seeking to hide their personality and insecurities behind a façade of culture and learning. However, they have learned to be expedient masking their less attractive traits of argumentativeness and pugnacity. (This shows in the extended “t” crossings and the extended angular endings to the letters “d”; “t”; “n” etc.) This person does not hesitate to use coercion to achieve their own ends (long angular lead in strokes to letters, excessive changes in pressure, hooks at the end of various end strokes) – which is unfortunate, for they have a good, methodical, precise, mathematically inclined mind (“i” dots precisely placed), and sound over all spatial awareness (well spaced text, using the paper economically but without crowding) which could achieve so

much more personal and professional recognition and fulfilment. This individual will make careful preparation before commencing a task (long curved lead in stroke), for they are impatient and intolerant of change and/or imperfection (angular lead in strokes and connections between letters). A tactile, sensuous, obsessive and rather self-indulgent person (excess of ink and flooding of ovals). When events and relationships cease to run smoothly this individual becomes difficult, fractious, self-destructive.

Maybe the build-up, over the years, of emotional, physical and mental tension and disability, is the cause of much of the frustration, suspicion and anger (the heaviness and darkness of the script together with smeariness around some of the letters together with the “hooked” and “angled” formations indicate a lack of physical and moral control) in this individual.

Certain graphic art lettering “a”, giving initially the appearance of an “italic” script, is too impatient and not sufficiently disciplined to produce any other than a very poor attempt at disguising their mental and physical state. If this is, indeed, the usual writing of an individual then every caution should be taken when dealing with them.

Sometimes
I am,
Sometimes
I think.

one's not
half two -
it's two
are halves
of one.

Writing is drawing

The Ancient Greeks had only one word for writing and drawing, and that was *graphein*, which originally meant to scratch, scrape or graze. Writing is handled by the most people like a passage of bad driving by a juvenile delinquent. A thoughtless rush of scrawl across a sheet of paper. A matter to be dispatched as quickly as possible. Writing is not a pain in the neck. Writing is the mind tracking out messages, thoughts and feelings. This collection of thoughts on thinking were done with the same dip pen. The thicks and thins of the strokes arriving by now one used the pen.

Writing is you on paper.

(Alan Fletcher, "Picturing and Poeting", London, Phaidon, 2006)

Letterworks

In the West we have little regard for writing. And indeed many people are even proud if they have a bad (aka lazy) hand. Personally I abhor sloppy writing. It conveys there's something dodgy about the writer's personal hygiene, ethical values, and emotional shortfall. I fancy not enjoying the sensuous pleasure in the penning of a thought. At art school I was taught by two distinguished calligraphers. One was a lady who'd spent ten years lettering out the names of all the pilots killed during the Battle of Britain in the Book of Remembrance. The other was a fellow who wore an embroidered smock and was extremely highly strung - after all, a slip of the pen can ruin months of work. Most people respond to skilled calligraphy with admiration. I think most calligraphy is boringly manicured, on the other hand I'm attracted to anarchic handwriting. The difference is one of attitude. Calligraphers generally have too much respect for skill at the expense of expression.

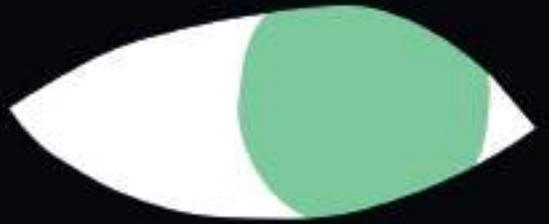
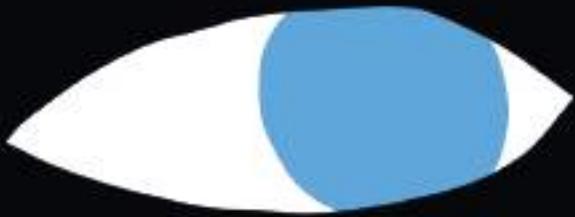
writing
is
drawing
is
writing
—

2

Workings of the Eye by Natalija Milenković

**«The man who can't visualize
a horse galloping on a tomato
is an idiot»**

André Breton



THE ART OF LOOKING SIDWAYS

from “The Art of Looking Sideways”, Alan Fletcher, 2001.

More of a visual jackdaw than a compulsive collector, I acquire stuff. Things which catch my eye. Ammonites in Morocco, votive offerings of Sicily, paper cuts in Hong Kong, glass pens in Tokyo. That sort of thing. I'm intrigued by useless information such as that eight percent of the population is left-handed, that giraffes only sleep five minutes every twenty-four hours, that Italians kiss twice, the Swiss three times. I enjoy encountering incongruities – a sign announcing ‘Blue Movies in Full Colour’. Like Wunderkammern, those eighteenth-century glass-fronted cabinets which displayed curious, this book is a collection of shards. In an unmarked field it is easy to wander... Most books

written on visual matters are authored by those who analyse rather than experience. Many are hard work and littered with academic jargon – autistic tendencies, cognitive expectancy, formative causation. They are concerned with the mechanics rather than the thoughts, with the match rather than the fire. The book attempts to open windows to glimpse views rather than dissect the pictures on the wall. To look at things from unlikely angles. References to sources are occasionally provided to keep you going. The book also has no thesis, is neither a whodunnit nor a how-to-do-it, has no beginning, middle or end. It's a journey without a destination.

“

*In an
unmarked
field
it's
easy
to
wander*

”

A NOMAD EYE

from “Picturing and Poeting”, Alan Fletcher, 2006.

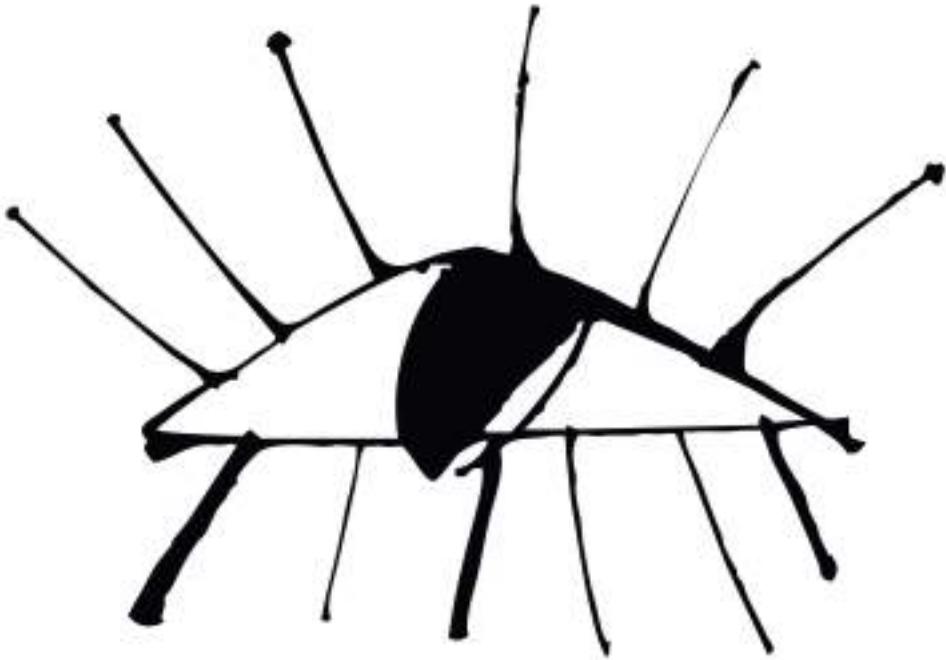


I have a penchant for scenarios that juggle with the natural order of things. Sometimes one discerns an inengruous sitation which is usually camouflaged by common sense. If I spot one, my first move is to put it down on paper before it gets forgotten.

Assume you're lying on a beach. You're bored and to entertain yourself you play a game of mental sightseeing. You foat your nomad eye high above ground, move it around, look down, look behind things, and look back at yourself.

The two eyes perceive, the third eye divines, the mind's eye composes, the nomad eye explores.

Not many people know they have one.



Shadow Portraits

You probably remember from Peter Pan that a shadow belongs to a person as much as their face does. Furthermore, shadows change according to dress, location, season, and time of day. No two shadows are ever the same. Your shadow is the essence of you at one moment in time. I find my shadows in the photocopying machine. Ensure it is well primed in ink, open the lid - leave it open - and press a button. The machine delivers a rich deep carbon-black sheet of paper. Perforate around the edges of the drawing of the silhouette with a pin. Carefully tear to realize the shadow. By the way, did you know that the grayling butterfly tilts its wings to align with the sun so that it doesn't cast a shadow?

(Alan Fletcher, "Picturing and Poeting", London, Phaidon, 2006)

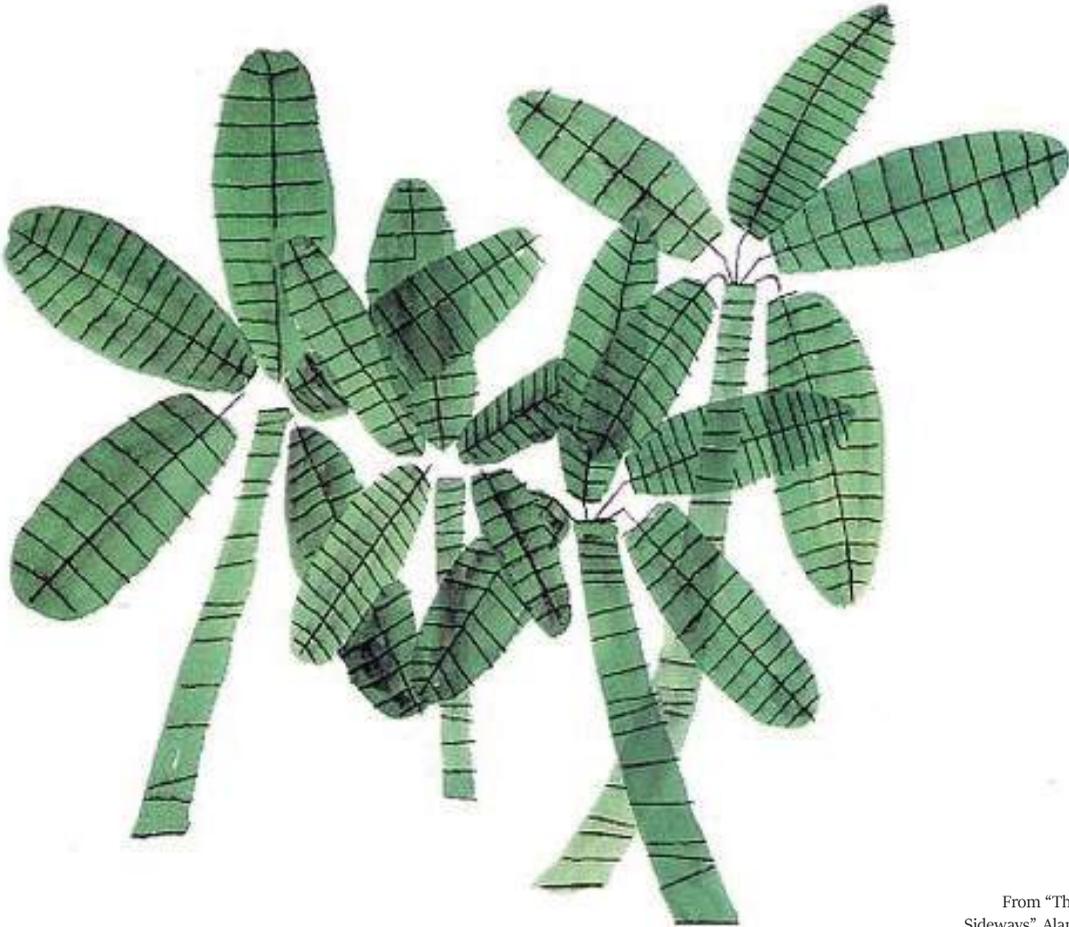


a homage to Max Ponty

“

Acuity is seeing things others may overlook - if you see what I mean.

”



From "The Art of Looking Sideways", Alan Fletcher, p. 182



I SEE WHAT YOU MEAN

from “The Art of Looking Sideways”, Alan Fletcher, 2001.

In William Golding's novel *The Inheritors*, the Neanderthals always say 'I had a picture' instead of 'I've just thought of something.' Anthropologists agree that for once a novelist got it right. The terms 'Show me', or 'I see what you mean' indicate a connection between sight and subject which is very real. After all, the highest compliment we pay to people of foresight is to call them visionaries or seers. Unless we can visualize something we are unable to think about it. E.M. Forster (or his aunt) once remarked, 'How can I tell that I think until I see what I say?' And Thoreau, 'You can't say more than you see!' One cannot separate one from the other, any more than the child who, describing his drawing, said he just thought

a thought and drew a line around the think. Children's drawings are invariably interesting because of this innocence and because they do not attempt to impress. Being untutored they are unadulterated, and therefore are a direct and unfiltered transmission of a thought. Visual thinking is a 'mental graphic system' which Steven Pinker describes as 'operating by rotating, scanning, zooming, panning, displacing and filling in patterns and contours'. An extension of visualizing is pictorial thinking – or imaging – which is the ability to conjure up something in the mind's eye, move it around, change it, and make judgements. A capacity which can be externalized by models, drawings, diagrams, or whatever.

KHARAKTER

from “The Art of Looking Sideways”, Alan Fletcher, 2001.

The word character (Gk. kharakter) originally meant an engraving tool, and by extension the impression or mark made by that tool, and by further extension the features and qualities associated with the mark.

Individuals have character and so do groups of people. Both have structure, form, features, behaviour and personality. Groups which evolve a shared culture acquire a corporate identity and esprit de corps.

To express this they invent signals which indicate hierarchical differences within a uniform appearance: tribal scars, royal regalia, ecclesiastical garb, military insignia.

Political, social and religious authorities have always understood the purpose and need for

such trappings, but commercial organizations were rather late to embrace the notion of corporate identity: the outward expression of an inner state or the outward statement of an inner commitment.

One of the first commercial applications was pioneered by a manufacturer of light bulbs. Peter Behrens, painter, designer and architect, was the mind and hand behind the style of AEG. Among those he employed to achieve the company ambition were Mies Van der Rohe, Walter Gropius and Le Corbusier. In spite of his prolific achievements Behrens wasn't popular — Gropius called him 'an artist on the make', and he was accused by his peers of ingratiating himself with the Third Reich.



The midday sun

The blurb on the book jacket of the Handbook on German Military Forces¹ says: ‘... exhaustively detailed, the handbook examines German military personnel from the lowest levels to the High Command. It describes the Wehrmacht’s administrative structure, unit organization, field tactics, fortification and defence systems, weapons, other equipment, uniforms and insignia.’ A reasonable synopsis of the ingredients required to create a typical corporate identity for a commercial organization. Of course participants and outsiders need to recognize the signals and emblems, otherwise you are into confusion. In the 1940s Alexander Woollcott, leaving a Manhattan restaurant, asked the resplendent uniformed figure by the door to call a taxi. The gentleman angrily spluttered that he wasn’t the doorman but an admiral in



Self portrait
Sun behind
me 12.15pm
24/vii/98
Castel d'Argile

the Navy. Nonplussed, Woolcott asked him to summon a battleship, which help you recognize a person or organization, whereas the image is the impression you have of that person or organization, and your reaction to this once you've recognized them. Image is more important because it's no good being easily recognized if you give a bad impression. On the other hand if you trade on your image then you have to be readily recognized. Nobody actually needs a sticky carbonated drink, which is why Coca Cola spent \$600 million in 1992 to make sure that you remembered not only who they are, but how they want to be perceived – young, trendy etc. Oscar Wilde said only shallow people don't judge by appearances and Aristotle Onassis took his word for it. He began his career flogging newspapers on the streets of Manhattan and

noticed that really rich people were always suntanned, all year round, and behind the ears too. To be successful it helps to look successful. The opposite attitude to that of the actuary who feels he doesn't have enough personality to be an accountant. Then there are people who are so translucent they have to pass through the same place twice to leave a shadow. A shadow belongs to a person as much as their face. No two are ever the same. Furthermore, they change according to dress, location, season, and time of day. The one opposite belongs to Sarah who helped me put this book together. The clue to deciphering this adumbrated portrayal lies in the shape of two shoes which reveal her standing facing to the right, at the top of the shadow. A shadow belongs to a person as much as their face. No two are ever the same.

A shadow belongs to a person as much as their face. No two are ever the same. Furthermore, they change according to dress, location, season, and time of day. The one opposite belongs to Sarah who helped me put this book together. The clue to deciphering this adumbrated portrayal lies in the shape of two shoes which reveal her standing facing to the right, at the top of the shadow. A shadow belongs to a person as much as their face. No two are ever the same. Furthermore, they change according to dress, location, season, and time of day. The one opposite belongs to Sarah who helped me put this book together. The clue to deciphering this adumbrated portrayal lies in the shape of two shoes which reveal her standing facing to the right, at the top of the shadow.



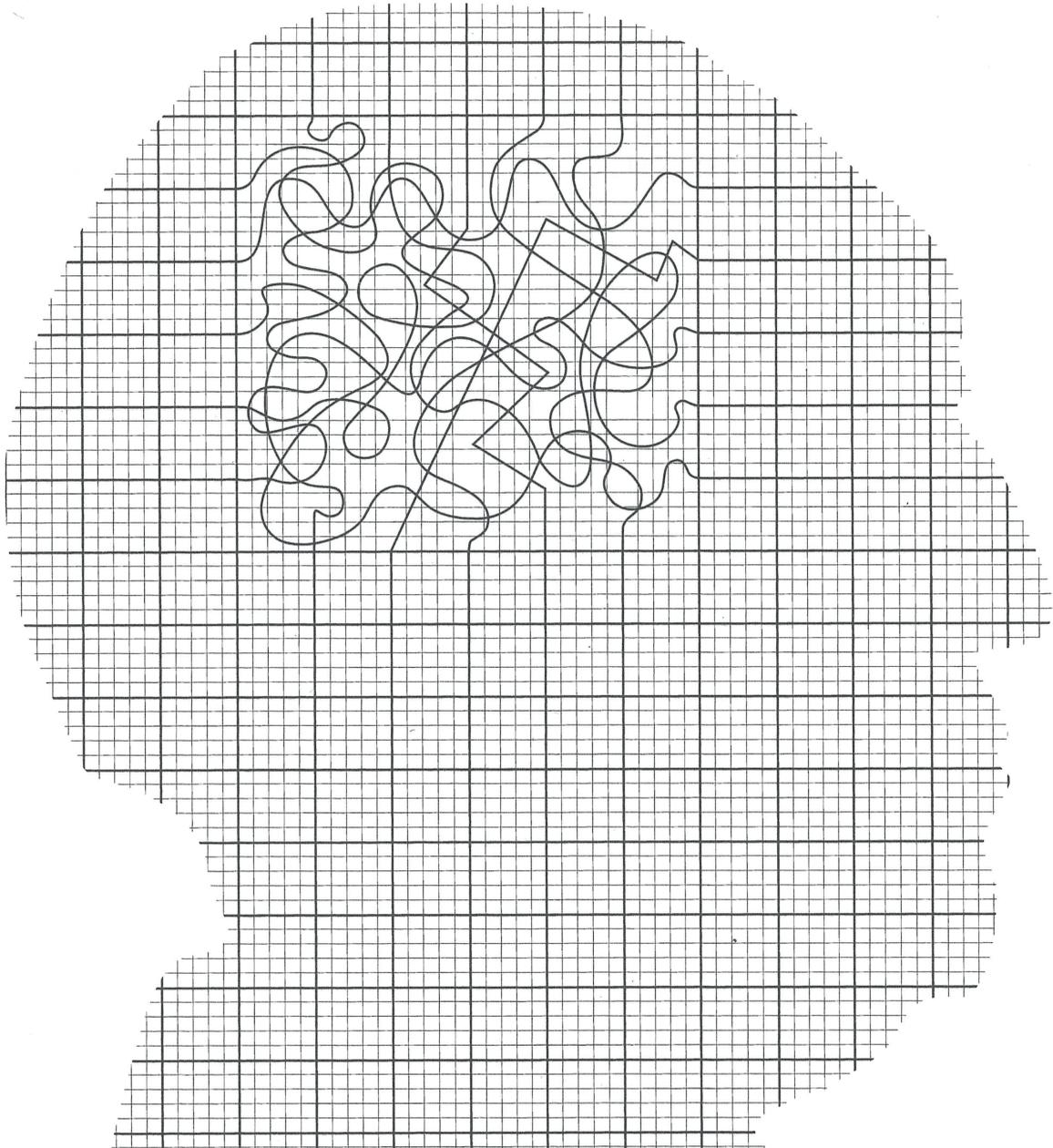
3

Workings of the Brain

by Jacopo Martinalli

**«How nice it would be to have
enough imagination to live
in a dream world»**

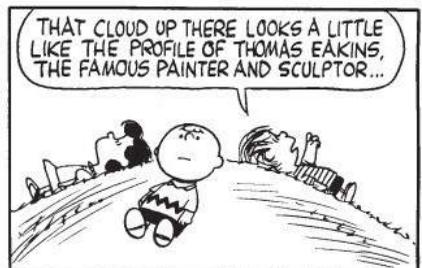
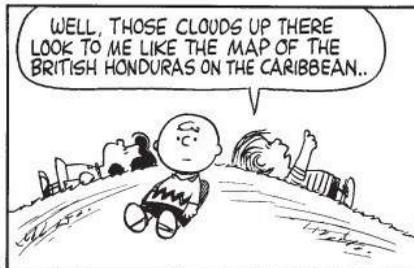
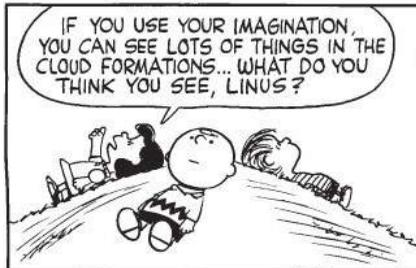
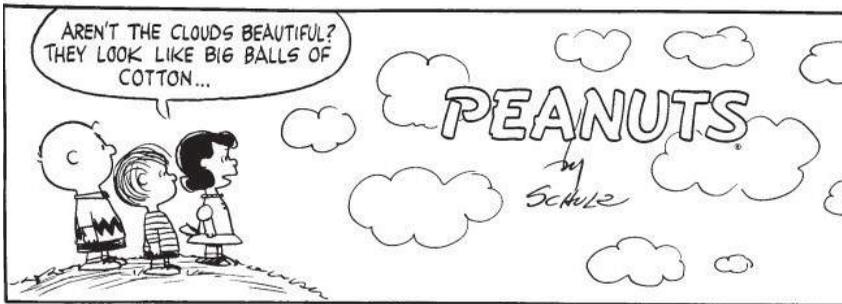
Ken Pyne



IMAGINATION IS THE ACTIVE INGREDIENT OF THINKING **from “The Art of Looking Sideways”, Alan Fletcher, 2001.**

Philip Roth delivered these remarks at The National Book Critics Circle in 1988: ‘The imagination has a conscience all of its own; you wouldn’t want it as a friend. This butcher, imagination, wastes no time with niceties: it clubs the fact over the head, quickly it slits its throat, and then with its bare hands it pulls forth the guts ... By the time the imagination is finished with fact, believe me, it bears no resemblance to a fact.’ Comments well substantiated by the Fortean Times, a periodical which reports on weird things such as woman gives birth to fish, lawnmower shoots man, a house that bleeds, tomatoes which use the telephone, man clubbed to death by a cucumber.

Not figments of the imagination, the editor claims, since all articles are endorsed with place, date and time of the happening. In an age where science is seen to explain everything, he says, awareness of the inexplicable is important. No wonder imagination has been described as a warehouse of facts managed by a poet and liar. However, sometimes there could be an explanation for such phenomena. The examples quoted in the book *The Nature of Things* (subtitled *The Secret Life of Inanimate Objects*) may make you think twice. As G.K. Chesterton explained, the function of the imagination is “not to make strange things settled, so much as to make settled things strange”.



TM, Reg. U. S. Pat. Off.—All rights reserved.
Copyright 1960 by United Feature Syndicate, Inc.

Have you ever seen a purple cow?

To imagine is like flying a kite. The mind, loosely tethered, is free to be blown out. Usually the direction it takes just happens but sometimes by tweaking the string it can arrive at an unlikely destination. Take Einstein who, struck with the thought of riding on a shaft of light in outer space while looking at himself in the mirror, interpreted the imagery to come up with the principles of his Theory of Relativity. Imagination, an unimaginative person once wrote, is what happens when a drunk loses his watch and had to get drunk again to find it. Although fantasy and make-believe flourish

in childhood they rapidly atrophy as one is moulded to fit the adult's grey consensus of reality. A child, out on a walk with its mother, suddenly points and cries out, "Look, a purple cow". The mother, perhaps rather tired and domestically harassed, snaps, " Don't be silly". And then delivers the crunch line: "There's no such thing as purple cows". So the child, a vagabond in the backwoods of rationality, is brought up to see the world in the prosaic terms of grown-ups and eventually forgets it ever saw a purple cow. Now purple cows walk around unseen by anyone.

Note. A friend of mine was reading the draft copy of this book. “Can people really see purple cows?” she mischievously asked me. I’d just been on holiday and in reflective moments had watched a tree outside the place I was staying. In the early morning its trunk was pale grey, the leaves silhouetted dark indigo against the bright pale sky. Late afternoon, in catching the edge of the sun the trunk was vermilion, the leaves become a tinge of deep brown. In winter the leaves will have gone - but the trunk will be probably be dark greeny grey flecked with silver bark. My answer was “yes”.

(Alan Fletcher, “The Art of Looking Sideways”, London, Phaidon, 2006)

WHO ARE YOU GOING TO BELIEVE, ME OR YOUR EYES? from “The Art of Looking Sideways”, Alan Fletcher, 2001.

Potemkin Villages

Lenin to Trotsky:

Now this is the truth, and I can refer you to many authorities. When Catherine II and her royal entourage sailed down the Dnieper River in 1787 to view the New Territories, the Field Marshal Potemkin created sham villages of painted canvas along the river bank to give the distinguished visitors a false impression of reality. We want no more Potemkin villages.

Trotsky to Lenin:

On the matter of the Potemkin villages I must disagree. They were real and this is the truth, for which I can cite many authorities. The illusion that they did not exist was created by historians, the source of most of our illusions about the past.

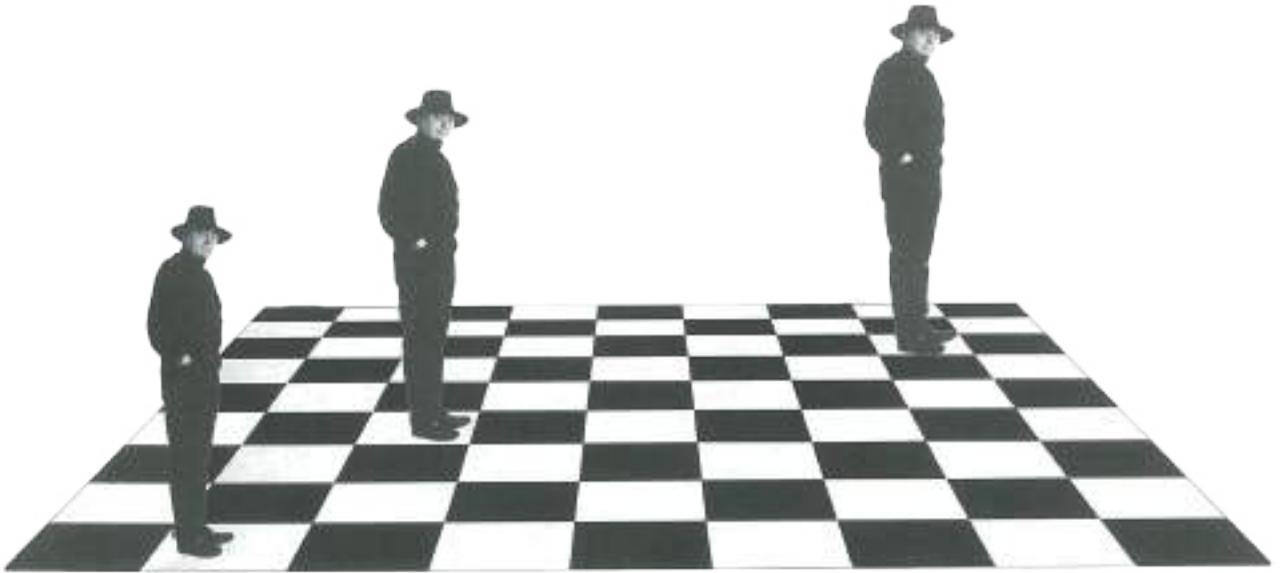
Lenin to Trotsky:

Dear Comrade, what does it matter who was responsible, my Field Marshal or your historians? In either event, somebody was rudely deceived.

CIRCLE



The Human Condition,
René Magritte



A Perceptual Paradox

The disappointment of holiday snapshots is that they appear undramatic in contrast to our vivid memory of the glorious panorama. The reason is that a camera only records the scene presented. It doesn't have the human capability which amplifies reality to make things larger than life. What makes the difference is our perceptual apparatus which automatically increases the scale of whatever we're looking at according to its distance from our eyes. It works like this:

- In physical terms an image halves in size each time its distance from the eye is doubled.
- In perceptual terms an image increases in size the further away it is from the eye. The difference between what we see, and what we think we see, is clearly demonstrated in a mirror. We have the impression that the reflection of our face is the size it really is. Actually it's half. Put your forefinger and thumb to your chin and the top of your head in the mirror, and then

bring your hand back and compare this measure to your actual face. For the more technically minded, use a ruler. Pairs of things look much the same size whatever their distance. An outstretched hand will look almost exactly the same size as the other hand which is held out at half distance, unless you overlap them.

In the illustration below depth is conveyed by the perspective created by the tiles, and so one automatically assumes the figure diminish in size the further away they are. In fact the reverse happens - the further figure appears to get larger. Our perceptual apparatus is unable to reconcile the conflicting information presented by the illusion of three dimensions, rendered in two dimensions on a flat surface. It therefore settles for what it thinks it should see. Actually the three figures are the same size.

Remember the Russian saying: "He lies like an eyewitness".

THE ART OF IMPROVISATION

from “Picturing and Poeting”, Alan Fletcher, 2006.

Vagabond Pizza

These pizzas are assembled with labels, stickers, price tags and endorsements surreptitiously acquired by the author on shopping trips or sent by friends around the world.

Although running a blue ballpoint around a kitchen plate and sticking down such stuff appears an innocent occupation, the pizzas also have their sinister aspect. For instance, they reveal the contributor’s personal eating habits, reflect their financial spend and indicate social standing.

(Alan Fletcher, “Picturing and Poeting”, London, Phaidon, 2006)

Menagerie of Imaginary Creatures

These creatures were born to amuse my three-year-old grandson on holiday. His task was to collect the rubbish. Mine was to make something of it. The first creature took shape with the core of a toilet roll, four corks, a piece of card, two bottle tops. All stuck together, covered with papier mâché and bright red poster paint. As I was handing him the finished article, with instant recall I remembered that Paul Klee always knew when something was finished because instead of him looking at the subject, the subject began looking at him. With great presence of mind I suggested to my grandson that he gave the creature a name and a sound, while I would look after it. He thought that was a good deal and was happy with the arrangement. A whimsical menagerie soon followed, conjured up from plastic spoons, bits of string, cigarette cartons, drawing pins, clothes pegs, ribbons, wires. Dressed in newsprint and daubed with a colour. And here, by grace of God and presence of mind, are most of them.

Bonzo





Podge

Porky



Ringmaster

The Chinese Zodiac

I have been collecting printed ephemera for years; tickets to memorable exhibitions, baggage stickers for a trip to America, an envelope from a kind letter, my first vehicle license. The sort of material that holds meanings for me and nobody else. A palette for constructing the animals. Working with these materials each animal had brought to life. However, to up the stakes I restricted the imagery to the heads.

(Alan Fletcher, "Picturing and Poeting", London, Phaidon, 2006)

Year of the dog



Year of the Ox



Year of the Dragon



Year of the Tiger



Year of the Rabbit



Year of the Horse



Bibliografia e sitografia

“The Art of Looking Sideways”, Alan Fletcher, London, Phaidon, 2001

“Picturing and Poeting”, Alan Fletcher, London, Phaidon, 2006

Alan Fletcher Archive, www.alanfletcherarchive.com

Fonti immagini

“The Art of Looking Sideways”, Alan Fletcher, London, Phaidon, 2001

“Picturing and Poeting”, Alan Fletcher, London, Phaidon, 2006

P. 33, detail from the book cover “Graphic Design: Visual Comparisons”, Alan Fletcher and Bob Gill, Littlehampton Book Services Ltd, 1964

