

DEREK BEAULIEU

KERN



LES FIGES PRESS
LOS ANGELES

Kern

derek beaulieu

Global Poetics Series
Les Figues Press

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Kern
FIRST EDITION

Text and cover design by Les Figs Press

ISBN 13: 978-1-934254-55-4
ISBN 10: 1-934254-55-X
Library of Congress Control Number: 2014945800

Les Figs Press thanks its subscribers for their support and readership.
Les Figs Press is a 501c3 organization. Donations are tax-deductible.

Les Figs would like to acknowledge the following individuals for their generosity:
Peter Binkow and Johanna Blakley, Lauren Bon, Elena Karina Byrne, Nicholas Karavatos, Coco Owen, and Dr. Robert Wessels.

Special thanks to Fisayo Adeyeye, Amber Donofrio, Allie Maher, Sara Newman, Becky Robison, Crystal Salas, and Genevieve Shifke.

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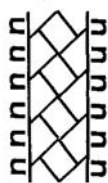
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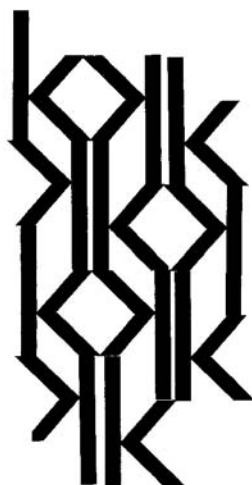
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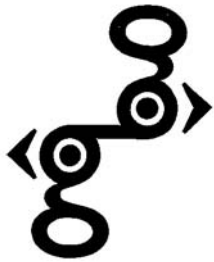






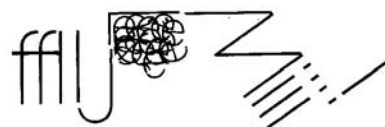




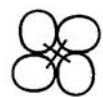


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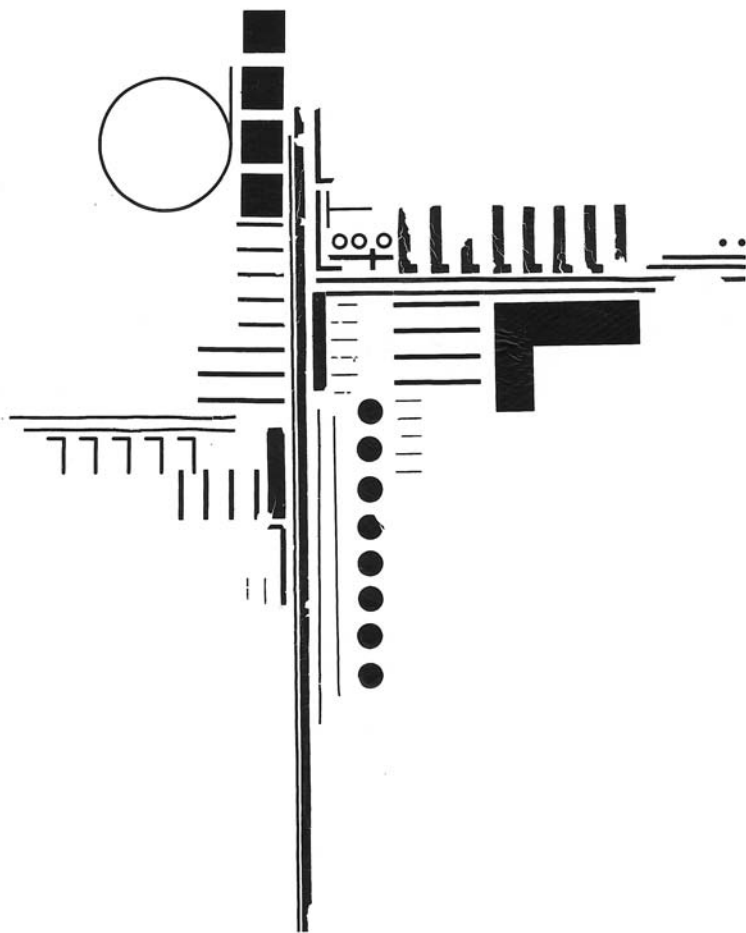




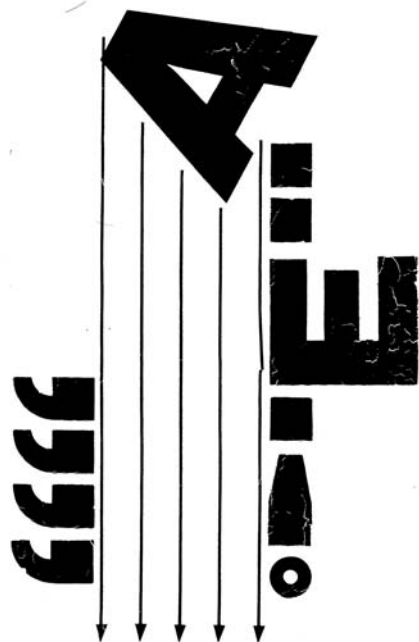


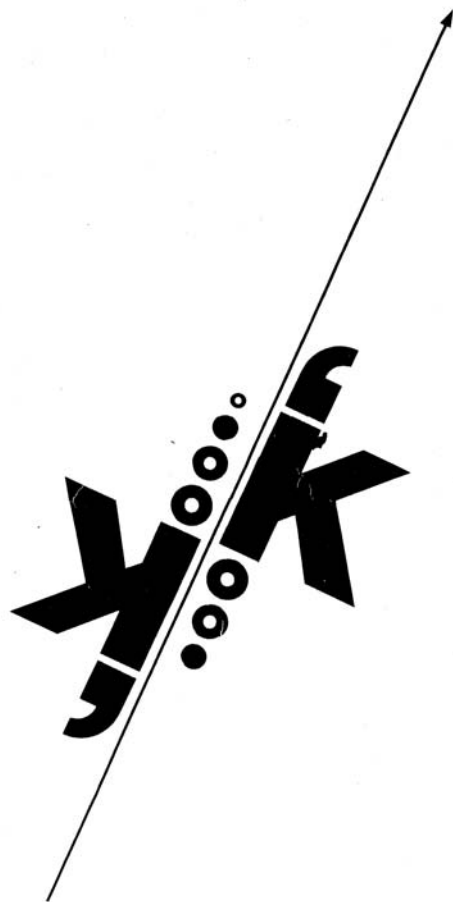




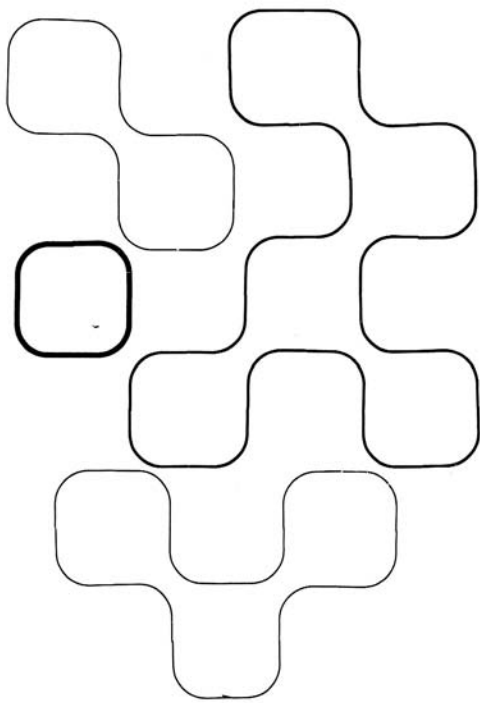


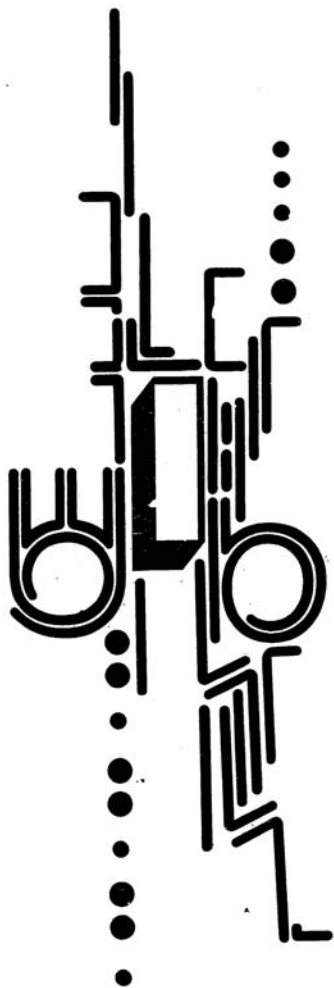






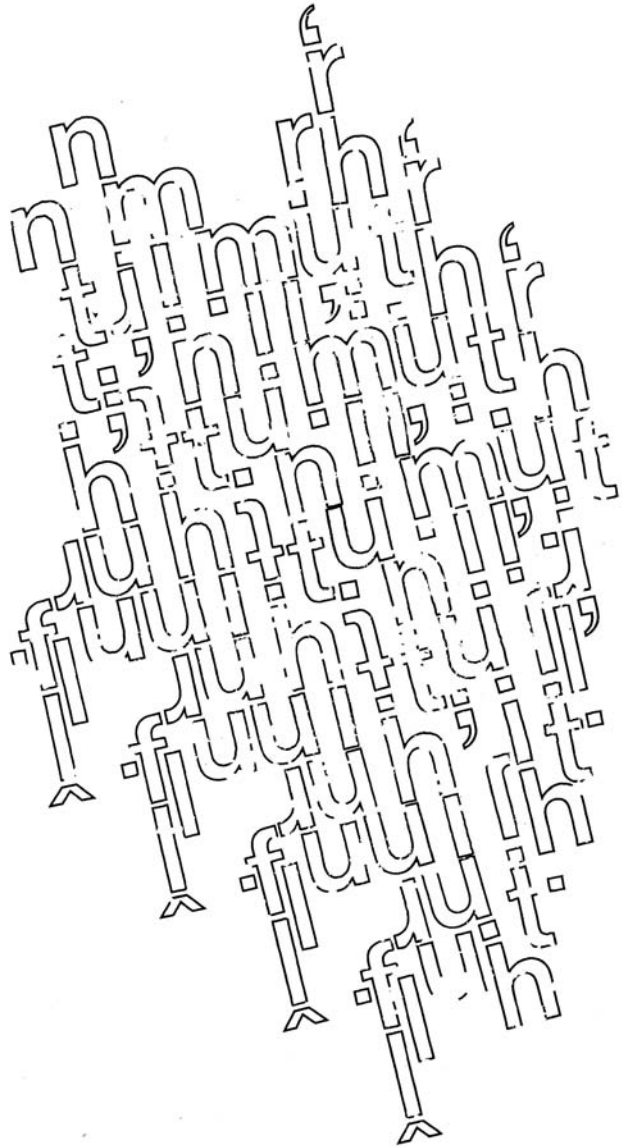


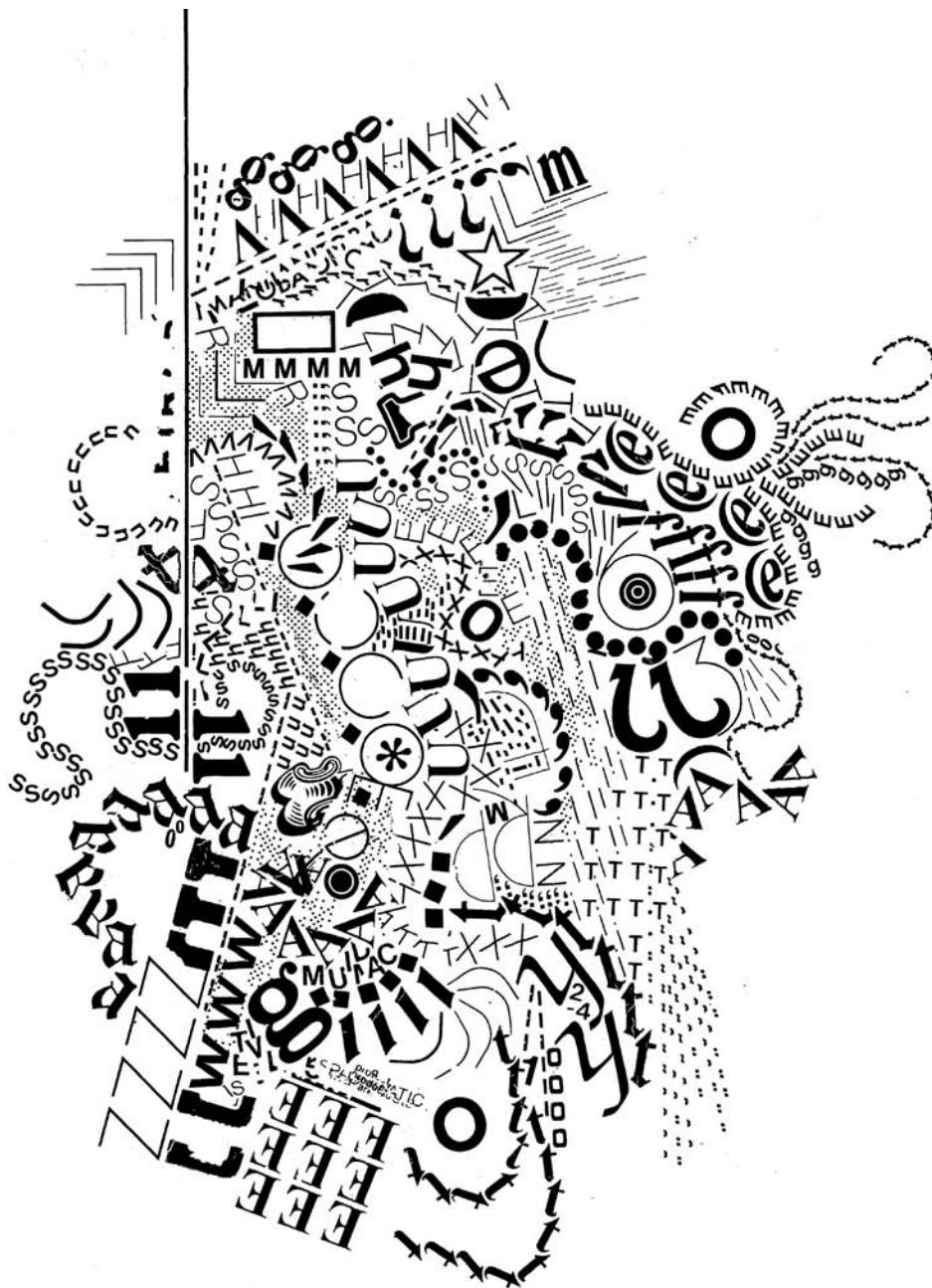


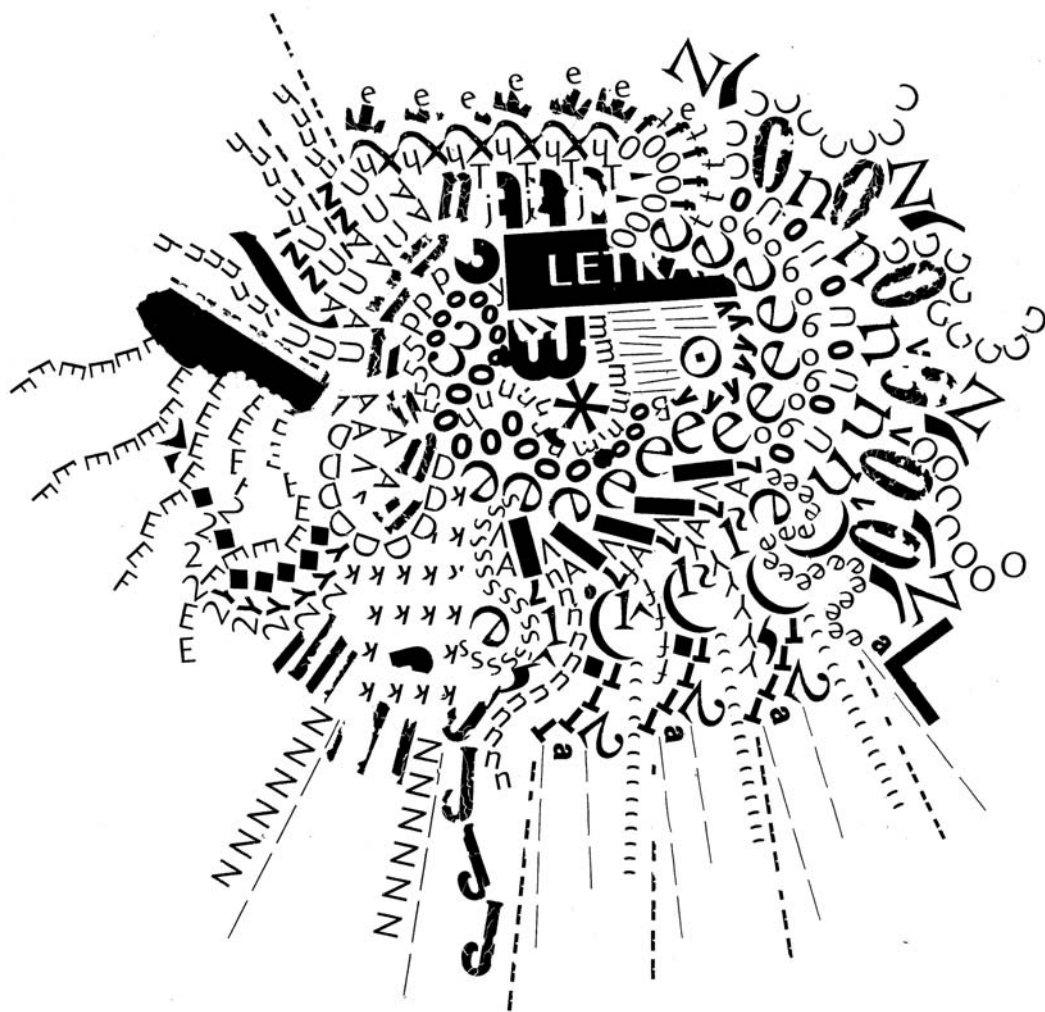






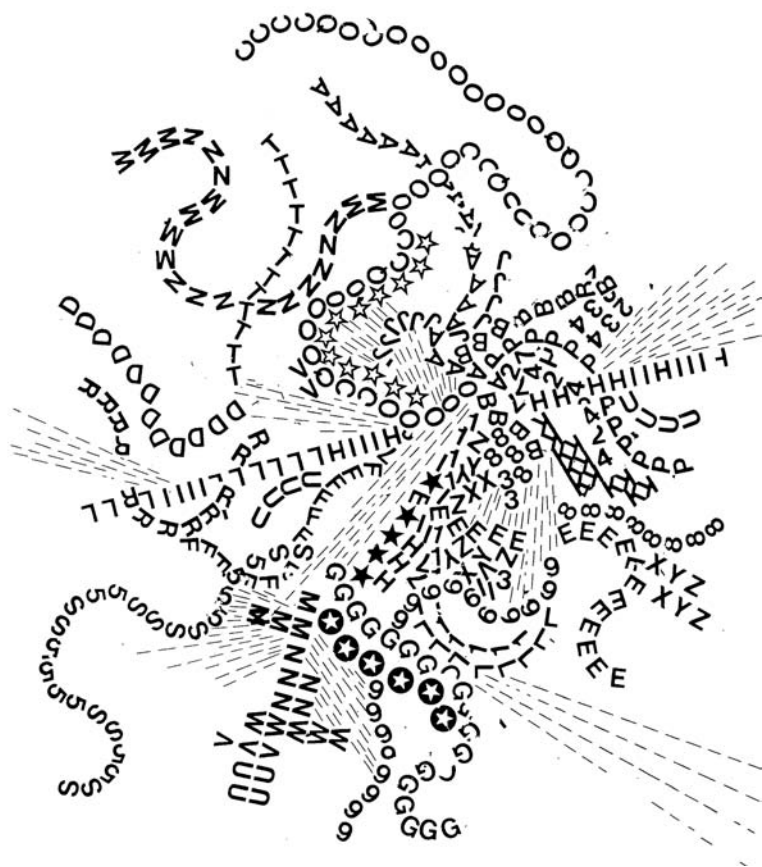


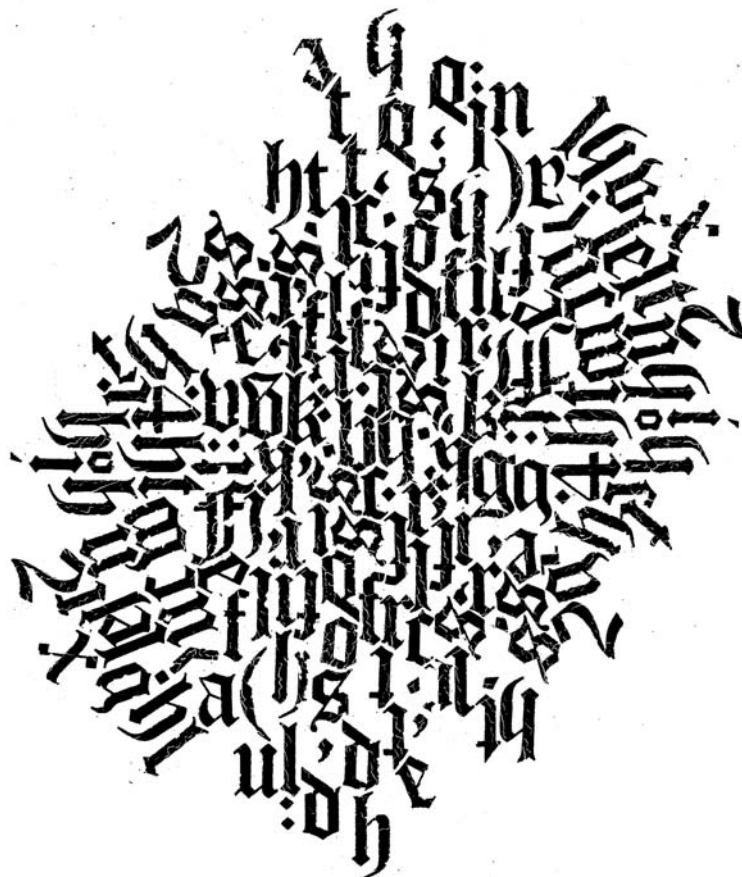


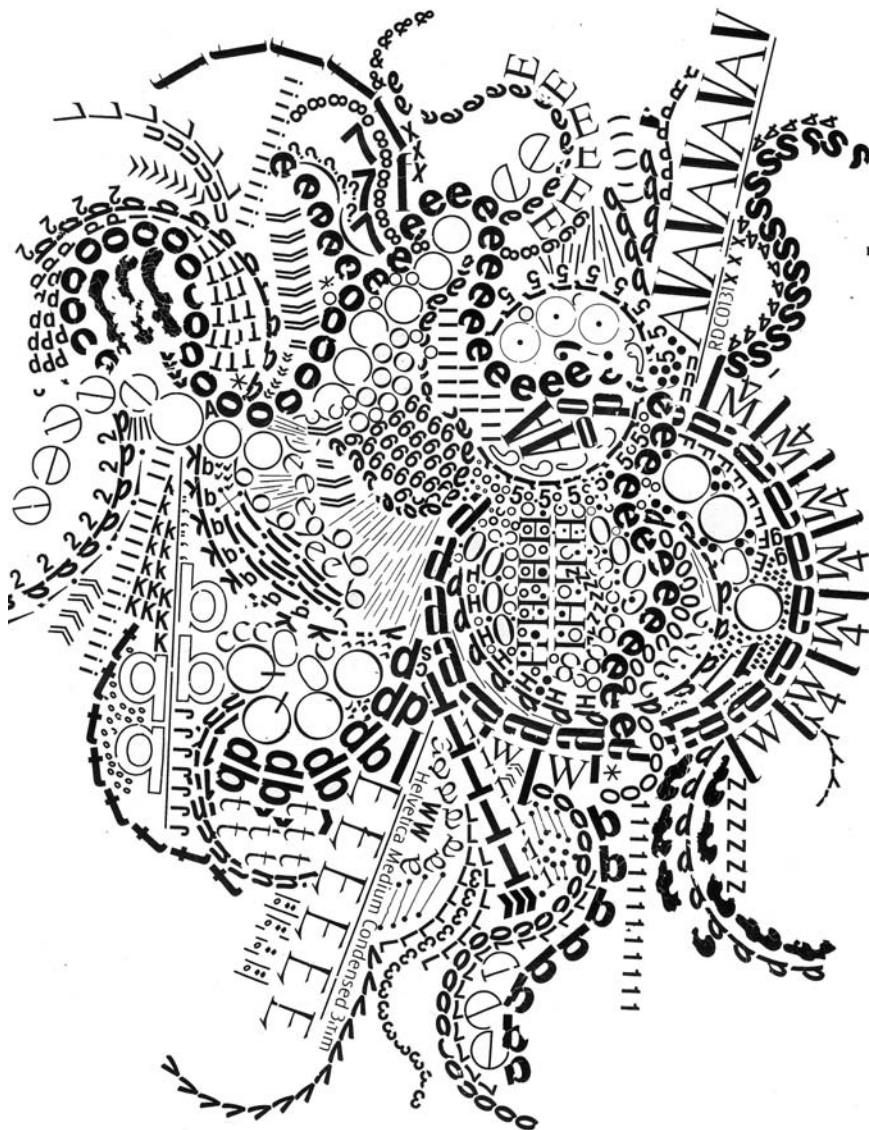


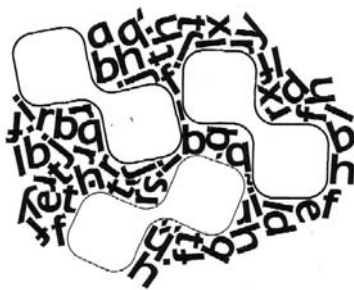


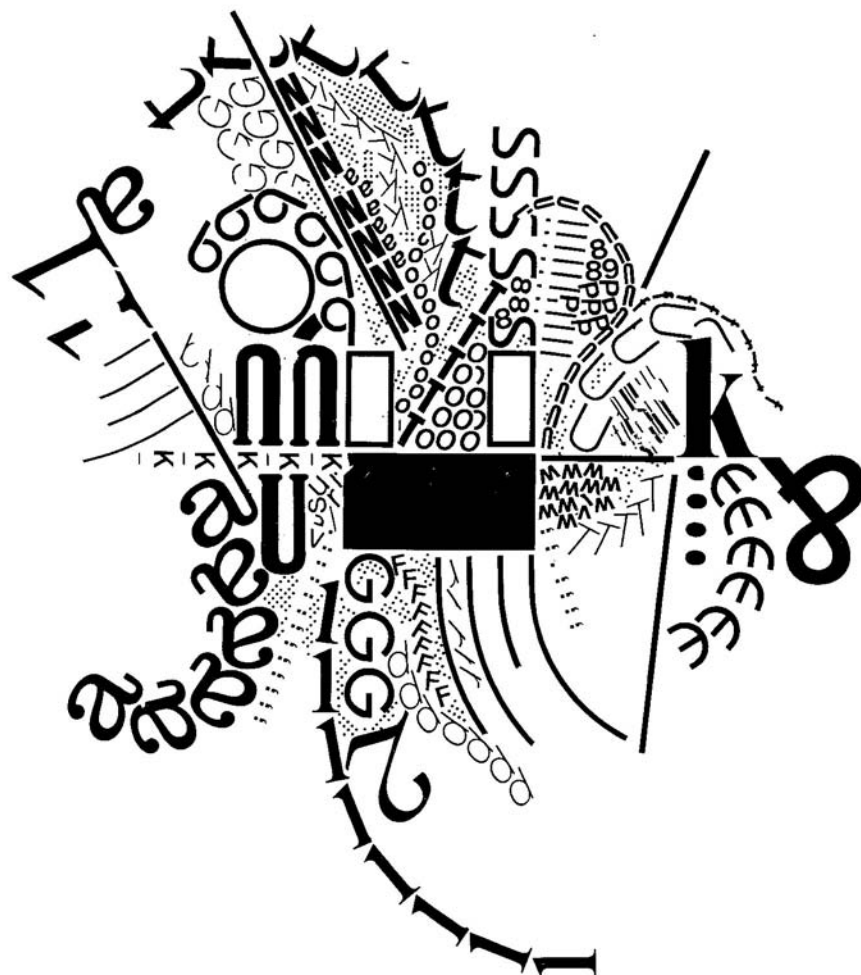






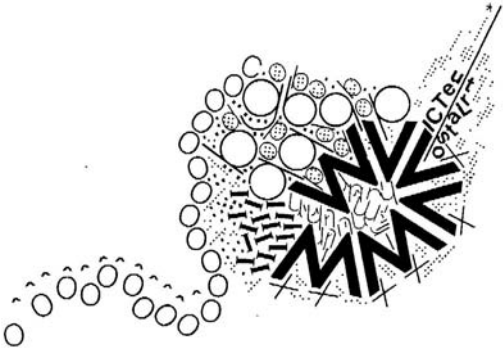








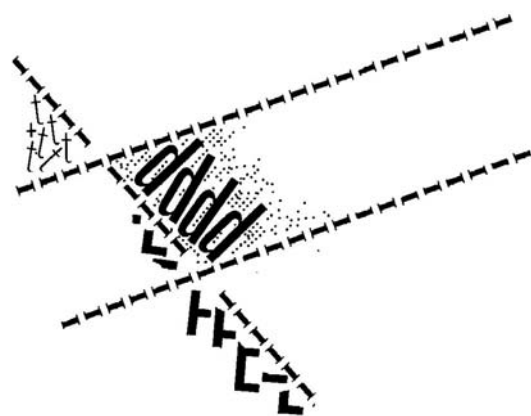




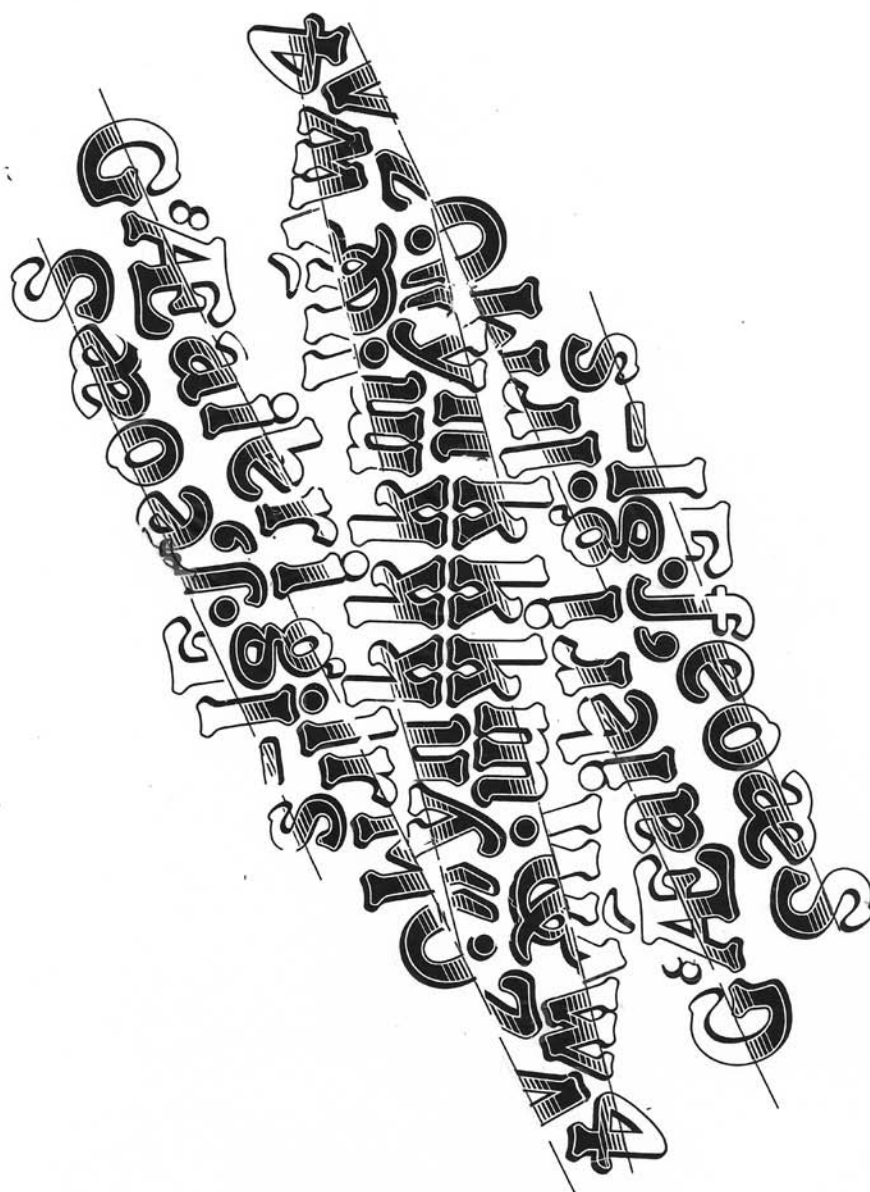


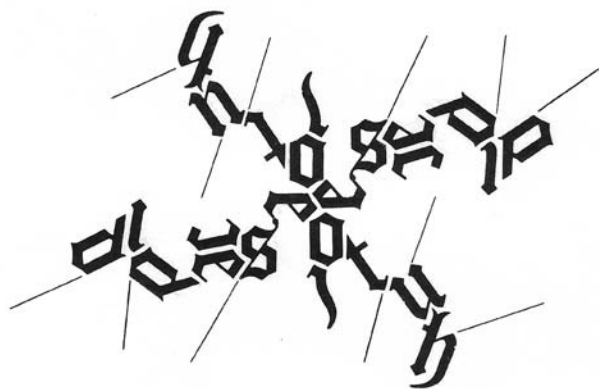


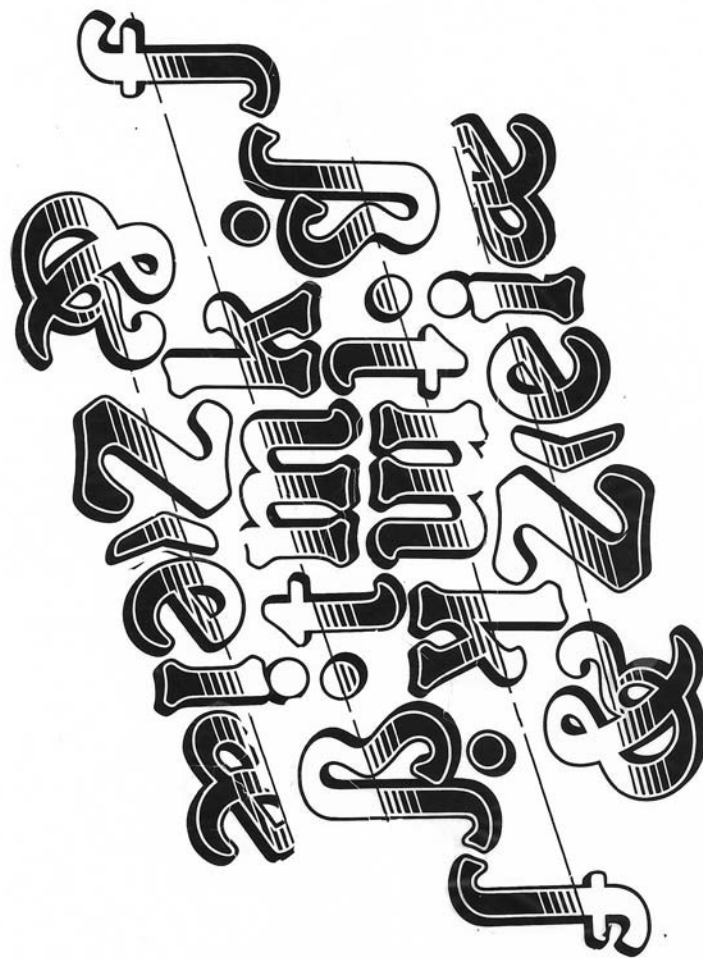


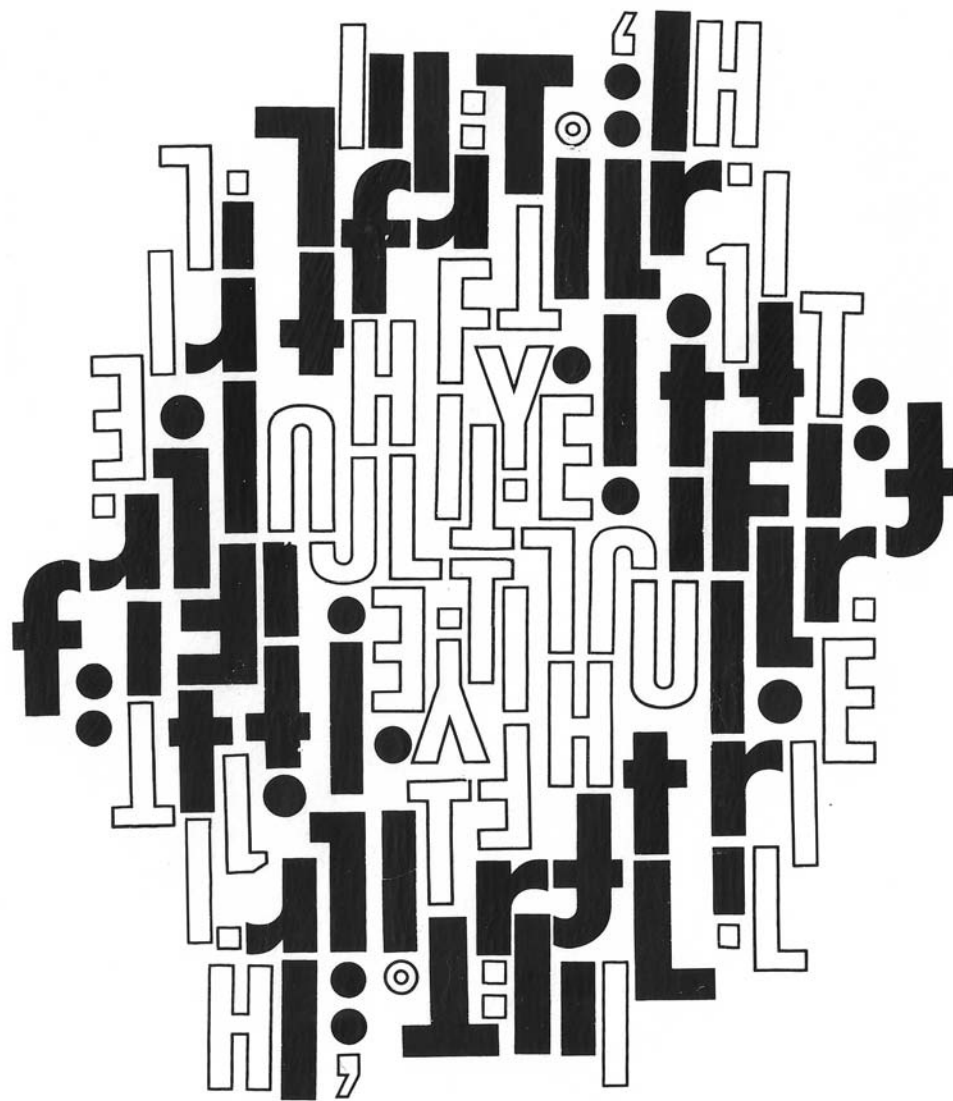


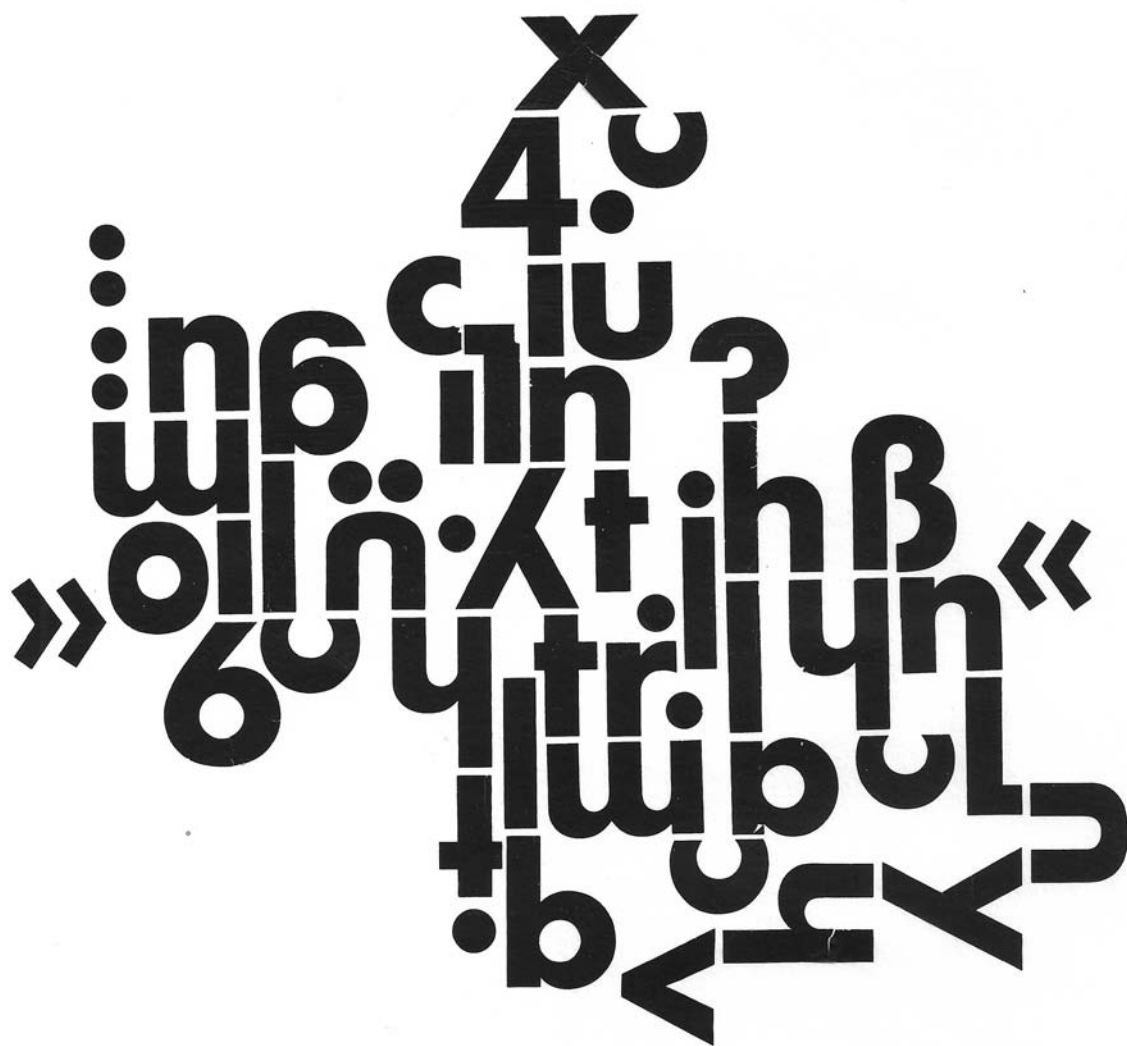


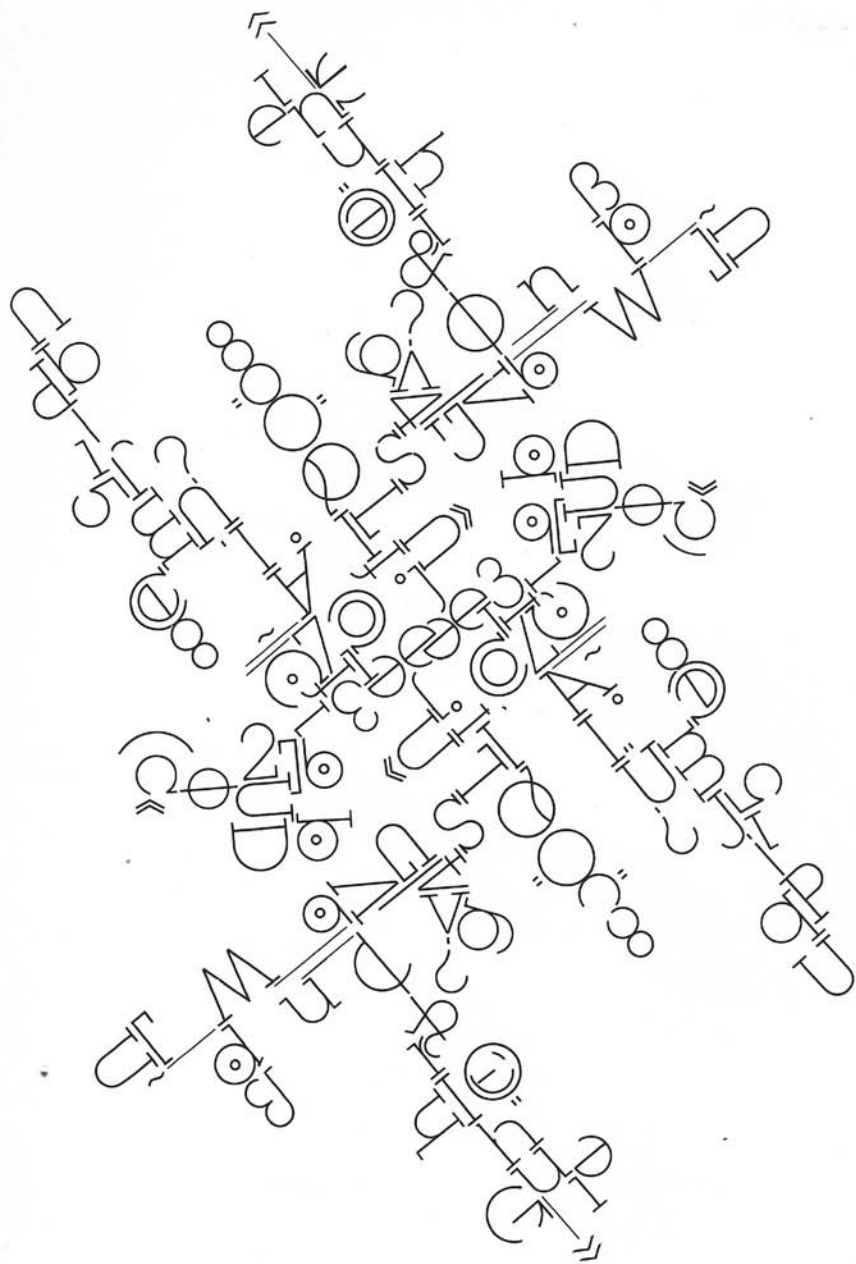


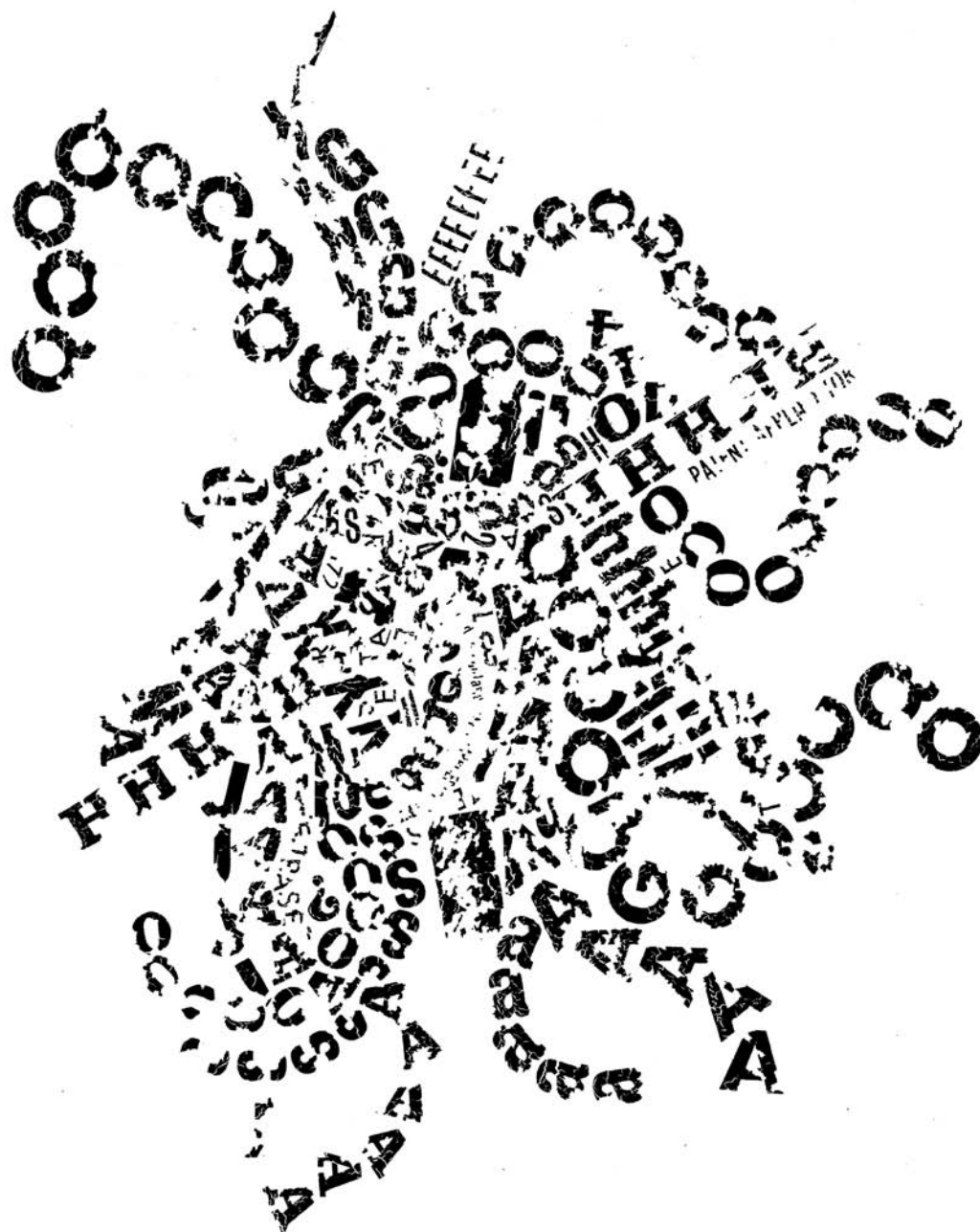








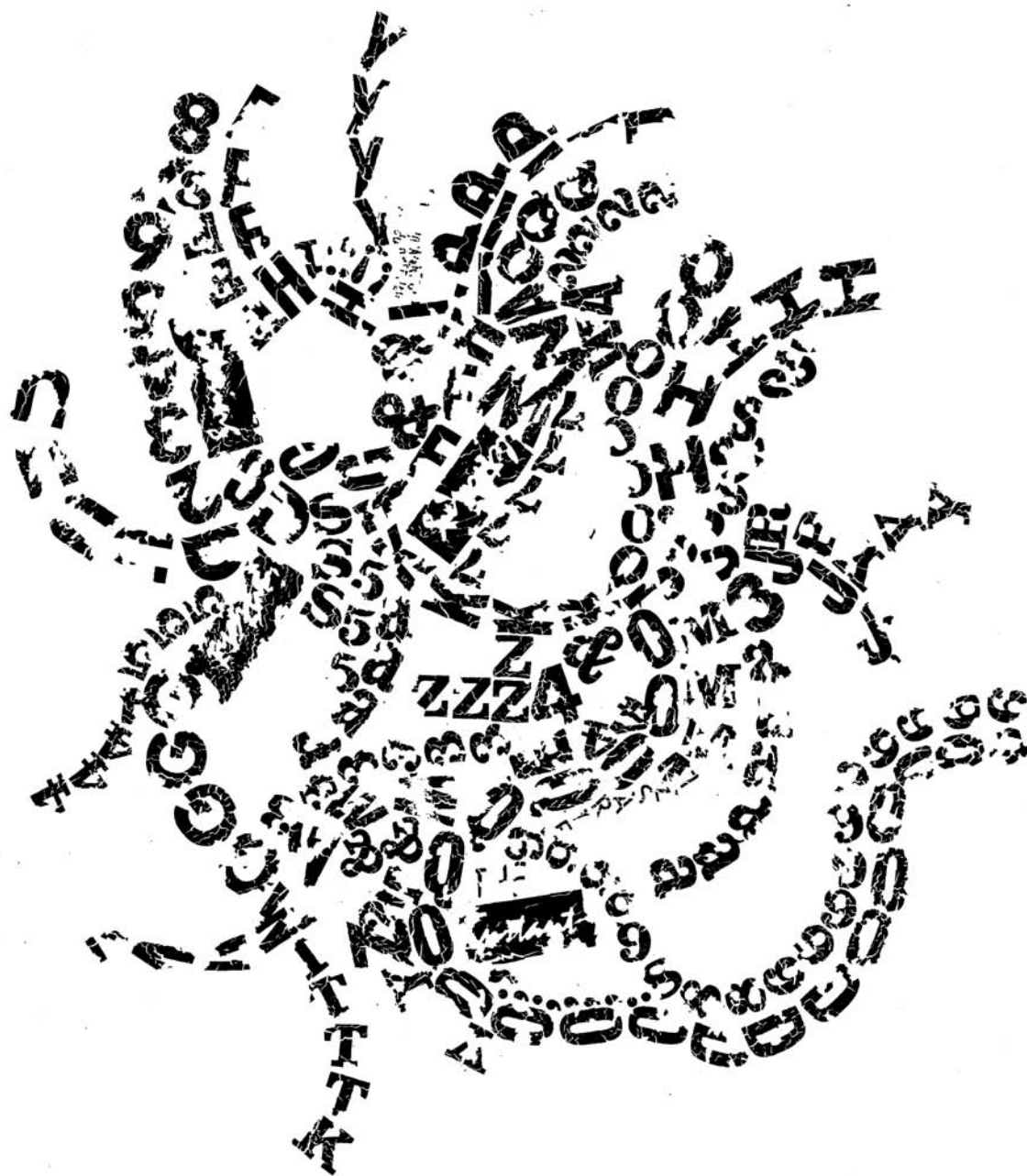




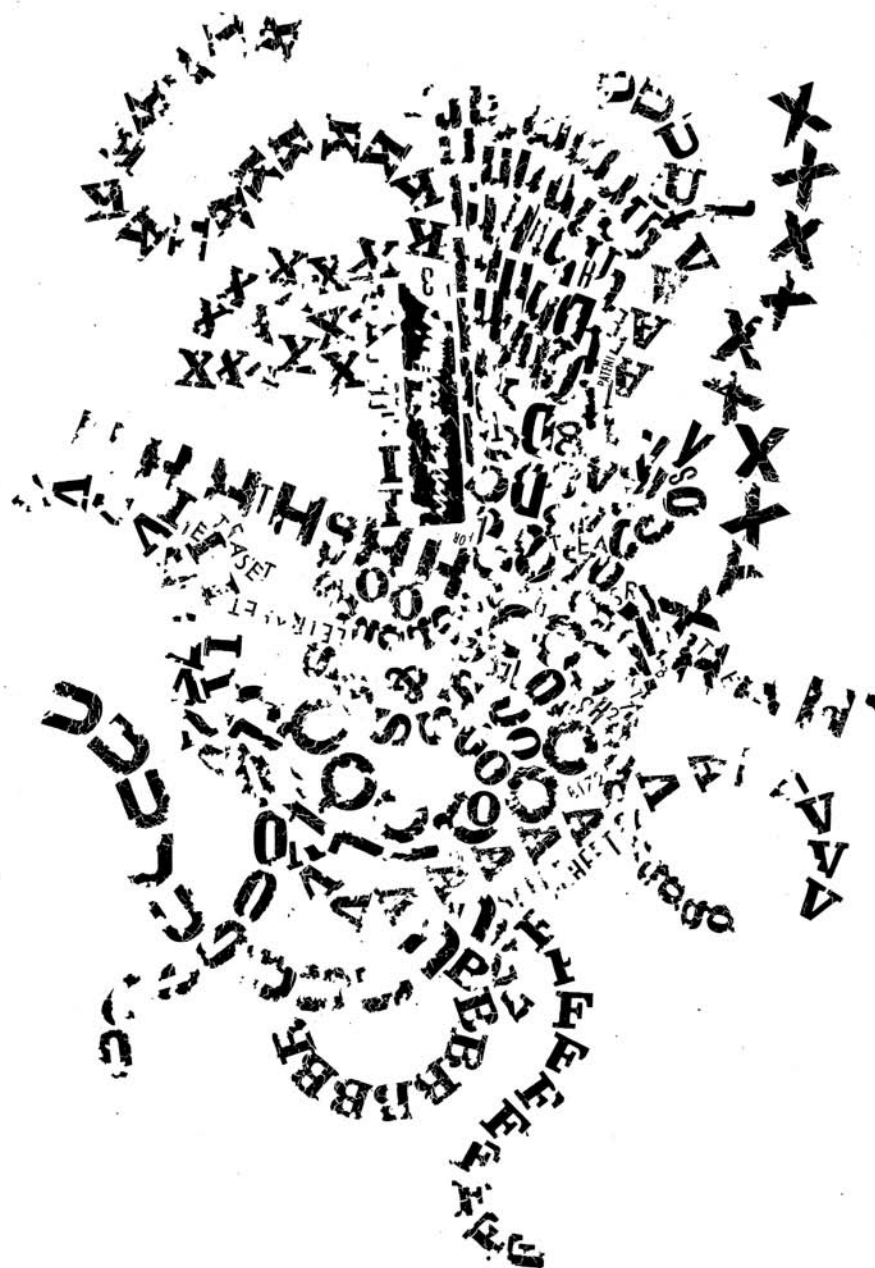








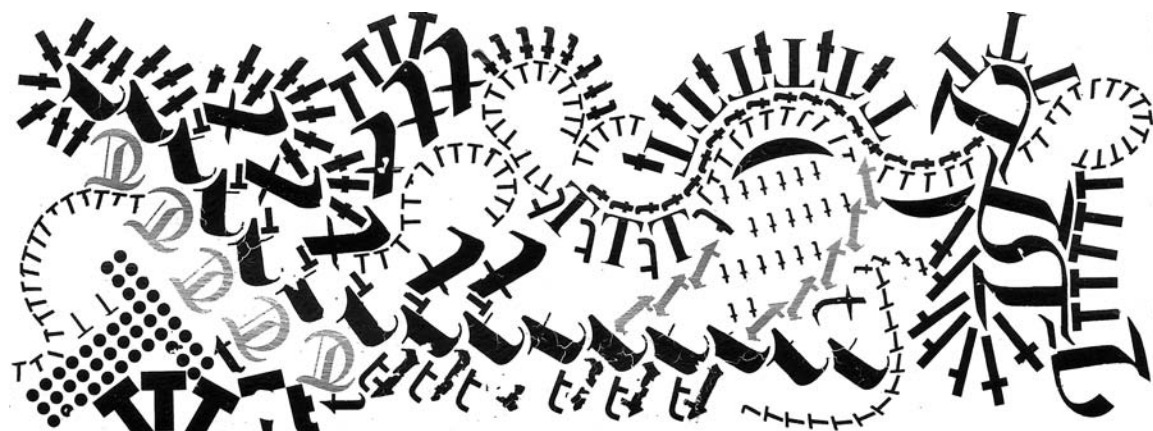




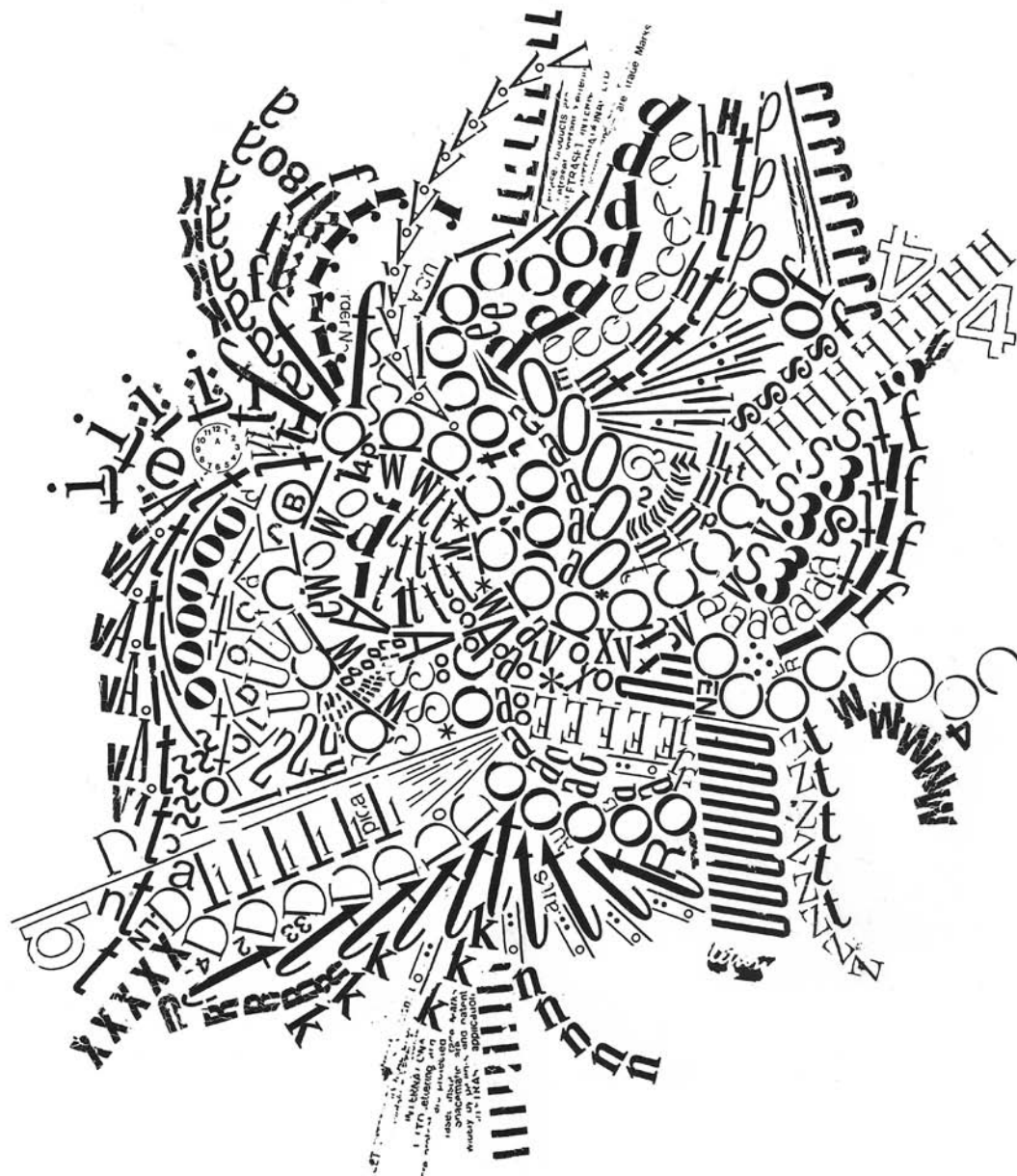


















Author's Note

Kern is made by hand using dry-transfer lettering without the use of computers. Once ubiquitous in graphic design and advertising from the early 1960s to early 1990s, dry-transfer lettering has been relegated to use by artists and hobbyists. At one point a specialized tool with an expensive price tag, dry-transfer lettering was used in graphic design and technical drafting in order to standardize graphic elements, eliminate the individuality of the artist's hand, and speed up the creative process.

Dry-transfer lettering has the disadvantage of being unforgiving. Once a letter is placed upon the page or canvas, that letter is permanently affixed and can not be moved or replaced. I construct these poems without the aid of plans or sketches; the work builds gesturally in response to shapes and patterns in the letters themselves one letter at a time, each placed by hand. The resultant poems, if executed with the same care given to projects by the best graphic designers, are logos and slogans for 'pataphysically impossible businesses.

Like logos for the corporate sponsors of Jorge Luis Borges's Library of Babel, *Kern* uses the particles of language to represent and promote goods and corporations just out of reach. *Kern* presents moments of poetic nostalgia for the signposts of a non-existent past; they fitfully recall an ethereal, ephemeral moment. In our dreams, the resolution of the oneric landscapes is only so clear—much of what our mind establishes as the backdrop for our antics is only as clear as need be. These poems are the street-signs, the signage, the advertising logos for the shops and corporations that are just beyond reach. They are not islands of meaning—semantic or corporate.

Like Gomringer, I believe that Concrete poems should be as easily understood as airport and traffic signs, but instead of leading the reader to the toilet, the directions they impart are spurious if not completely useless. Concrete poems need to be cognizant not of readability but of lookability. Airport signage is designed for instant and momentary recognition and comprehension as ultimate goals; viewers need not read, they only need momentarily stare and receive.

Kern attempts to refuse linearity in favour of the momentary. Way-finding signage is designed to be easily understood in a moment; it operates without the need to read; it only requires consumption. Designed to be cogent, smoothly digested and transparently communicative, way-finding signage and traffic signs work extra-linguistically. Instead of leaving logos and slogans to the worlds of advertising and graphic design, I think it better suits poets to craft work which is responsive to a new reading milieu. These poems perform a poetic intercession into the language of signage and complicate the need to "panlinguistically" communicate in favour of co-opting the discourse, and the form, of the advertising logo and the plastic. *Kern* progresses from the logo and the slogan into increasingly large fields of semantic detritus, building into field-wide explosions of engulfing, unending recombinant material. *Kern* occupies the page in the same way that the Nike swoosh sits on a shoe, or how the neon overwhelms the Tokyo streetscape...

Acknowledgments

The poems in *Kern* have been published in magazines and journals, books and chapbooks, as 1” buttons, t-shirts, broadsides, and have had them projected on the sides of buildings—often at the same time. My thanks to the editors, curators, and administrators of those spaces.

Vanessa Place, Teresa Carmody, and Andrew Wessels at Les Figs have provided amazing opportunities and have made making this book a real pleasure—thank you.

My great appreciation for the freindship, support, conversation and camraderie of Gregory Betts, Christian Bök, Amaranth Borsuk, Kit Dobson, Johanna Drucker, Craig Dworkin, Lori Emerson, Rob Fitterman, Kenneth Goldsmith, Jeff Hilson, Peter Jaeger, Simon Morris, Marjorie Perloff, Sina Queyras, Jordan Scott, Nick Thurston, Tony Trehy, Darren Wershler, and Eric Zboya.

Thank you to my parents and family.

And finally, Kristen: thank you my love.

About the Author

derek beaulieu is the author or editor of 15 books, including *Please, no more poetry: the poetry of derek beaulieu* (Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2013) and the conceptual novels *flatland: a romance of many dimensions* (information as material 2007; UbuWeb 2011) and *Local Colour* (ntamo, 2008; Eclipse 2012). He is the publisher of the acclaimed no press and is the visual poetry editor at UbuWeb. beaulieu has exhibited his work across Canada, the United States and Europe and currently teaches at the Alberta College of Art + Design. derek beaulieu is the 2014–2016 Poet Laureate of Calgary, Canada.

"The detritus of signage is all around us. The poems in Derek Beaulieu's riveting new collection begin by resembling the signs, logos & slogans of everyday life—and then become more & more unreadable. No two of these constellations are alike; each promises something it cannot quite fulfill, as readability, having failed, gives way to lookability. So suggestive are these images that we cannot stop looking, trying to decipher, to arrest the flow. *Kern* presents moments of poetic nostalgia for the signposts of a past that never fully existed."

—Marjorie Perloff

"Do letters have lives? We have to wonder, seduced as we are by the antics of these characters. The tradition of taking alphabetic forms & making them into suggestive glyphs has a complex history in the signs of masons, brands, trademarks, monograms & graphical poetics. In Beaulieu's *Kern* the principle of enjambment is put to poetic purpose. *Kern* is a living demonstration that poetry is about unleashing the potential of combinatoric protocols to drive the performative art of letters on a page."

—Johanna Drucker



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