

**HOW?
ARE
YOU**

**ALPHABETUM XII
2023**



HOW? ARE YOU

HIGH ON TYPE

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The writing hand

Akiem Helmling

Recently, I received a letter at my house. On the envelope was my name. Inside there was a folded handwritten note on a white sheet of paper. Just one sentence, which, unfortunately, I could not read. Although it was just three words, at least this is what I thought, I could not decipher any of the symbols I saw. I could not even identify the note's language: English, German, Dutch, or something else? The whole situation bothered me so much that I scanned the letter and processed it with OCR.¹ But, like me, the algorithm could not produce any meaningful information.

This made me think about myself and the computer.

Later on, I decided to make the image of the note the desktop background on my laptop. Now, whenever I work on my computer, the first thing I see are those three groups of indecipherable letters. And when I look at those indexical symbols,² it bothers me the most that, on the

1 Optical Character Recognition (OCR), a function included in programs, which algorithmically converts an image into encoded text information.

2 Charles S. Peirce distinguishes signs into the three categories of icons, indexes, and symbols.

1st. Those whose relation to their objects is a mere community in some quality, and these representations may be termed Likenesses.

2d. Those whose relation to their objects consists in a correspondence in fact, and these may be termed Indices or Signs.

3d. Those the ground of whose relation to their objects is an imputed character, which are the same as general signs, and these may be termed Symbols.' (*Writings of Charles S. Peirce, A chronological Edition, Volume 2, 1867 — 1871, page 56*).

We could say simply that icons are images that represent an idea one to one in a graphical image, like a little drawing of a tree. An index

one hand, I can clearly see that there are three groups of letters, but on the other hand, I am unable to identify which ones they are. Sometimes, I ask myself if this note is a prank by somebody who knows about my interest in letters and therefore came up with the idea to send me a letter with a drawing, which looks like letters but is just a drawing.³ But in this case, it may be a very clever prank because it triggered my interest much more than it would have had I been able to read it. Nevertheless, one thing was for sure: the letter was written by somebody for some reason.

The writing hand is one of the most mysterious but also one of the most overlooked cultural phenomena. Evidently, writing it is one of the oldest human practices. I am also taking the liberty to include the cave drawings of Lascaux as a product of the writing hand. This way, we could state that before there was religion, there was

refers to something else, which is somehow connected with the sign, like smoke representing fire and danger, or handwriting which represents the person who wrote it. A symbol is a sign which is based on an agreement, where there is no clear connection between the thing it represents and the symbol as such. In that context, letters are symbols for Charles S. Peirce because there is no connection between the letter A and the sound this letter represents. The same also applies to ideographic characters like Chinese, where one could also argue that they are highly simplified icons.

Based on this distinction of signs, a piece of handwriting (including signatures) is always simultaneously indexical and symbolic. A signature is a symbol for the name of the person who wrote and at the same time, an index for the person itself. (See also Sonja Neef, *Imprint and Trace, Handwriting in the Age of Technology*, Reaktion Books, UK, 2011, page 34).

3 If you would like to have a similar experience, get a copy of the book *Metamagical Themas* by Douglas Hofstadter. Ignore all the text and just look at the drawings which introduce each chapter. Enjoy every second that you do not yet have a clue what you are looking at.

the writing hand. Before there was science, there was the writing hand. Before there was art, there was perhaps the writing hand. Humans create and distinguish themselves through the writing hand. Or did you ever hear of any other creature, plant, or animal which possesses a writing hand, just like we do?

But why do philosophers reflect so much on the written word but not on the writing hand? The American philosopher Charles S. Peirce envisioned, for example, our relation to the world as a semiotic web of signs, in which we, too, are signs.⁴ Consequently, there is, finally, no difference for him between a word and a human being. However, he understands written language as a logical semiotic system, in which the aesthetic dimension of the writing hand is left behind.⁵

4 'Man makes the word, and the word means nothing which the man has not made it mean, and that only to some man. But since man can think only by means of words or other external symbols, these might turn round and say: „You mean nothing which we have not taught you, and then only so far as you address some word as the interpretant of your thought.“ In fact, therefore, men and words reciprocally educate each other; each increase of a man's information involves and is involved by, a corresponding increase of a word's information.' (*Writings of Charles S. Peirce, A Chronological Edition, Volume 2, 1867 — 1871*, Indiana University Press, 1984, USA, page 241)

5 Another well-known example in this context could be the book *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* by the Austrian philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein, and the infamous final sentence: 'Wovon man nicht sprechen kann, darüber muss man schweigen.' It is this final statement which gives this book its ethical meaning. At the same time, it shows that Wittgenstein's idea of writing was very much influenced by the writing machine and the formal written logic, rather than the phenomena of the writing hand. If Wittgenstein would have consistently regarded writing as an action which starts with a writing hand (which is drawing on a surface) he would have probably considered another conclusion. Once he would have understood writing first of all as a silent personal aesthetically reflective action, instead of a controlled logical one, he might have rather written: 'Wovon man nicht sprechen kann, darüber muss man schreiben.'

Of course, one might criticize my earlier remark that the drawings of Lascaux could be understood as the product of the writing hand. We call those human traces 'drawings' (instead of writings), so evidently, they are the product of the drawing rather than the writing hand. However, if you consider that writing by hand starts with drawing letters, we may conclude that drawing and writing — at least when done by hand — are nearly identical.⁶ How should we, for example, regard a child's activity, imitating the letters it sees without the knowledge of letters as such? Is there a clear distinction to be made, or is it, after all, dependent on the observation and the observer itself? Once you know that letters exist, you will obviously experience the act of drawing letters as an act of writing. And as long as you do not know that letters exist, you will be unable to distinguish between writing and drawing because both ideas are based on words, which are themselves grammatical constructions of something you do not yet understand. So how do you distinguish between writing and non-writing anyway?

It is interesting to note that, although human writing is one of the oldest human intellectual activities, it has not changed much since humans wrote in the caves of Lascaux. Still today, we express ourselves through very similar sequential writing systems, like those used in the oldest writing systems we know: notation systems which consist of a set of signs (like letters, ideograms, or emojis), and grammatical systems, which determine how the symbols should be used and composed. Even though we acknowledge that communication with technical sys-

⁶ That is the significant difference between writing by hand (chirography) and writing with letters (typography). In the first case, it is the writer who is writing the letters, in the second case it is the machine (used by the writer).

tems like computers is very different from inter-human communication, we still use the same writing logic in both situations.

The reason for this may be both intellectual and technical. Intellectually, we may be conditioned by our typographic surroundings and consequently believe that writing must be sequential, no matter if this is done by a writing hand or a writing machine (Schreibmaschine). What we disregard in this case is the historical fact of the simplification and standardization of writing due to the limitations of early, static typographic systems. Though the German mathematician Regiomontanus (1436 — 1476) invented the unique and beautiful square root symbol⁷ at the same time as Gutenberg (ca. 1400 — 1468) invented book printing, it was impossible for Gutenberg to reproduce Regiomontanus's beautifully nested symbol with his device. The reason for this was the 'staticness' of the moveable type (or, one might say, the absence of the writing hand). While Gutenberg letters could move and be reused, they could not change their appearance. But precisely this would have been required to be able to write the square root as Regiomontanus invented it. It is surprising to see how little research has been done on why people actually write and, even more importantly, why we write the way we write. Since letters do not refer to any natural phenomena but are purely made up by humans (to create themselves), an alternative letter logic is imaginable. From an objective, rational point of view, there is no necessity for letters to be unique and static. Do letters have to be readable to qualify as letters?

Technically, we have not yet come up with typographical input devices which can convey as much

⁷ Written as a lowercase 'r', and allowing other characters to be nested in the symbol itself.

information as we express through our writing hand. Walter Benjamin nicely described this deficit in the text *Lehrmittel*, which was published with the collection of essays titled *Einbahnstraße*. 'The typewriter,' he says, 'will alienate the hand of the man of letters from the pen only when the precision of typographic forms has directly entered the conception of his books. One might suppose that new systems with more variable typefaces would then be needed. They will replace the pliancy of the hand with the innervation of commanding fingers.' In this perspective, it is interesting to know that a couple of years earlier, Benjamin received the book *Lesabéndio* as a wedding present from the Israeli philosopher and historian Gershom Scholem, where such a situation is already described. Published in 1912, *Lesabéndio* is an intergalactic utopian novel by the German author Paul Scheerbart, which describes life on the planetoid Pallas. In Scheerbart's words: 'Most of the work done here would have been quite impossible if every Pallasian had not had a great many hands — both very coarse — and very fine. The latter included those with fingers with which one could easily write like with a fountain pen.'

Re-reading this passage of *Lesabéndio*, I wonder if the two sorts of Pallasian hands are a metaphor for the two dimensions of our own writing hands. The coarse one, which is logically controlled by our brain, and the fine one, which reveals our uncontrolled unconsciousness (the part of ourselves of which we are not aware). Isn't Benjamin's concern that something of us might be lost once the writing hand is replaced with a typographic machine? A writing machine may be capable of translating the thoughts of a writer onto a piece of paper but in the process, the person behind the thoughts may disappear.

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High on Type

Writing

Medium

Play

Collaborate

How

SCHRUVEN WRITING

Several
Questions

On
Writing

Is writing just a trace of
a movement?

Could you write only on top of a
surface or also through a surface?

Or with the surface?

Do we need surface to write?

Does writing create dimension if
the surface is only flat?

WRITING IS MORE
THAN 'JUST' A
TRACE.

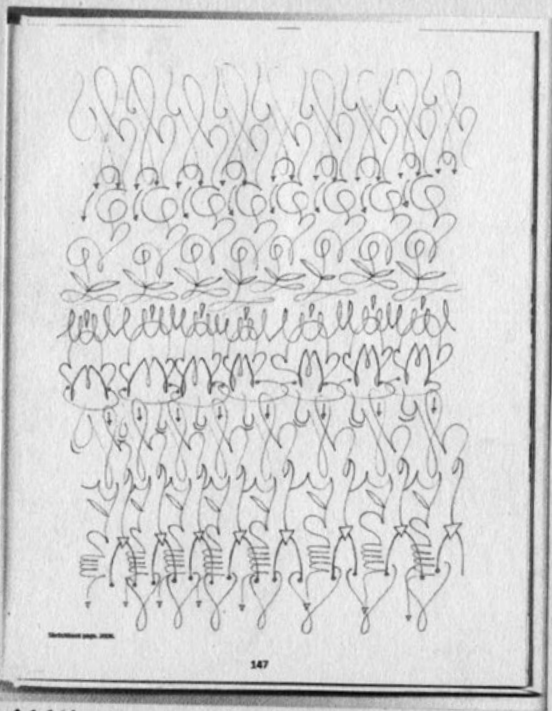
Yet I like to consider traces of movements
as writing. It's a door towards the past

no

Writing is an act
of performative
nature. It is both as much
the trace of a move-
ment and the phy-
sical as it is the
action of making it.

and contains information about the posture, medium, surface and so forth.

~~What is the difference between writing~~
Is Calligraphy writing? In
writing is spontaneous, improvised,
It doesn't have to look effortlessly.
It is allowing mistakes, so you can learn
and discover. Calligraphy is about repetition,
it is copying a gesture in a precise manner.
When you can do both at the same time
it gets interesting, spontaneous, precise repetition.



SCAN OUT OF JOB WOUTERS'S BOOK:
"LETMAN THE ARTWORK AND LETTERING OF JOB WOUTERS

I had a talk with
one of my students,
who was having
trouble with the
meaning of text.
His calligraphy is
superb, but the beau-
tiful letters had to
say something, right?
I tried to help with saying
that developing a meaning
should go hand-in-hand
with developing your
writing.

||||| WRITING?

~~~~~ WRITING?

~~~~~ WRITING?

WRITING?

↳ writing can be both figurative and abstract?
What is writing? Is this writing? ↓

~~~~~  
~~~~~  
~~~~~

← OR THIS?  
WRITING IS STILL  
WRITING EVEN IF  
NO ARCHIVAL  
TRACE IS LEFT (?)

~~~~~ ← OR THIS?

~~~~~  
IS THE ABILITY  
TO REPRODUCE  
A CORE VALUE  
OF WRITING?  
THAT WOULD  
MEAN THAT  
WRITING  
EQUALS:

# CHOREOGR- APHY

OR NOT?

EMACI...  
EMACI...

- Directing
- Movement
- Temporality
- Spatial Awareness
- Repetition
- Interaction

lost after the insurmountable bankruptcy of the publisher in 2011.

In 1976, Toots published *Kalligraafilisi etüüde (Calligraphic Studies)*, which focuses on his more expressive calligraphic art. By the late 1960s, Toots had started to distance himself from conventional brush lettering and to take inspiration from the Japanese art of writing. Toots called the style "choreographic calligraphy." It began to dominate his work and become his signature style. Toots' best stu-

ONE HUNDRED BOOK COVERS  
/ VILLU TOOTS  
Text: Mart Varik



**Dike**

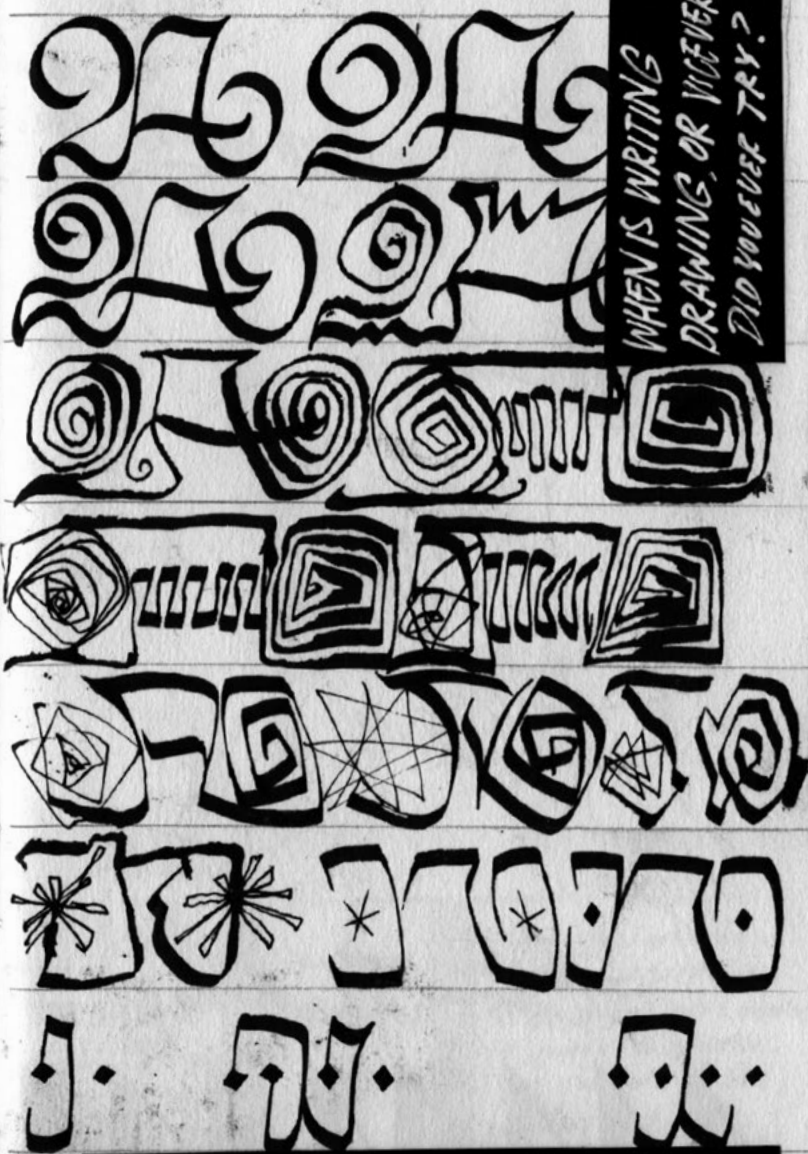
*Evan Thompson*

**PARTNERS IN A DANCE**

**WHO BRING  
FORTH**

*Each Other's*

**Movements**



**WHEN IS WRITING  
DRAWING, OR VICEVERSA?  
DID YOU EVER TRY?**

**THIS IS AN ESTAFFETTE-MULTI-PLAYER-  
GAME...THE 'A' REFERENCE MAKES IT WRITING?**

# AN INFINITE STROKE



WHEN DOES  
WRITING GET  
MEANING?

In this picture  
you see a take  
from a writing  
performance  
part of a project  
we did at the  
"Alpha bitum in West"  
in the Hague.  
(WITH HENK OSTERLING)

We formed a  
collective writing-  
machine

The distance be-  
tween the  
strokes  
was created  
by dragging the  
paper through  
underneath  
the selfmade  
endless-  
marker.

↓ The 'machine' was us four  
working as one body → SEE THIS  
ON THE NEXT  
PAGE.



The distance between the strokes makes it "readable"



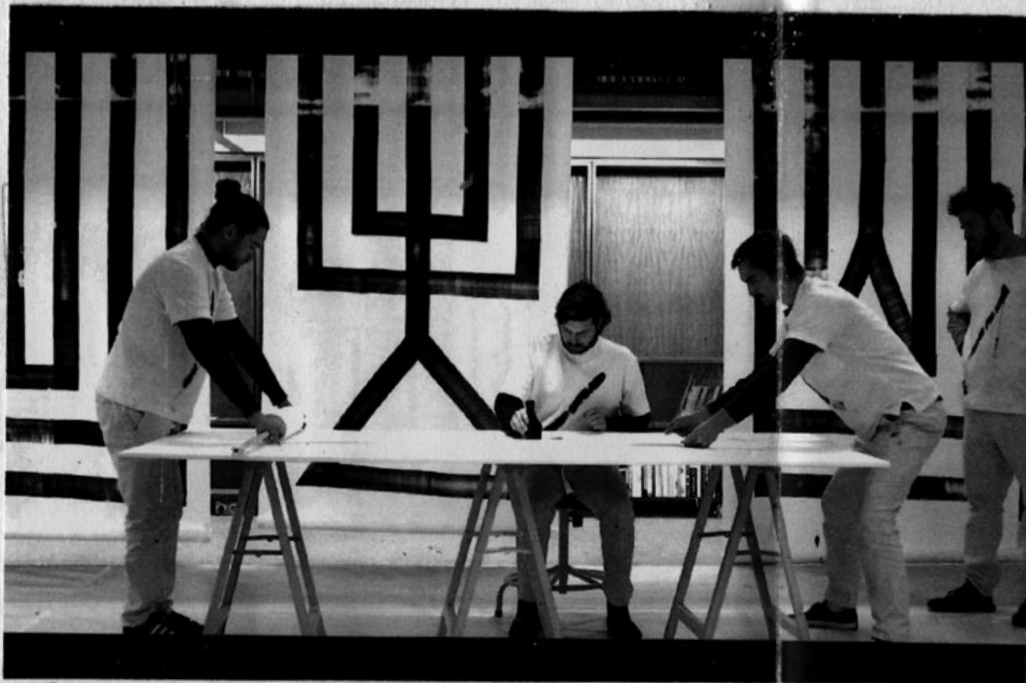
In this writing  
machine performance  
every person was needed  
to make a stroke.  
The rhythm of the  
writing is defined  
by both the movement  
of the paper and  
that of the pen.

READ BETWEEN  
THE LINES



THE INFINITE SAWTOOTH STROKE CAN BE READ ONLY WHEN THE DIACRITIC MARKS  
HAVE THE RIGHT POSITION.  
DIA IS GREEK FOR THROUGH  
THROUGH CRITICAL MARKS  
WRITING GETS IT'S MEANING

THE INFINITE SAWTOOTH STROKE CAN BE READ ONLY WHEN THE DIACRITIC MARKS  
HAVE THE RIGHT POSITION.  
DIA IS GREEK FOR THROUGH  
THROUGH CRITICAL MARKS  
WRITING GETS IT'S MEANING



Still from the process-video, 2022.





PIC BY IWAN BARN.

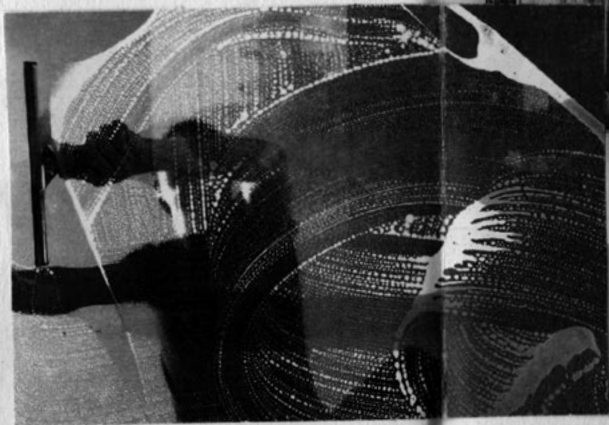
**WRITING IS CONTEXT.**

OR MAYBE IT IS  
CAUSE IT'S PLACED  
IN A BOOK ABOUT  
WRITING, SO YOU  
PERCEIVE IT LIKE  
THAT.

*Is writing still writing  
if you do it unintentional?*



From Left to Right:  
Brigitte Bardot, 1966. Pin-up photo.  
Windowcleaner, 2013, Shutterstock.  
Pablo Tomok, 2019, Rutowski gallery.  
Unintentional writing in  
different contexts and  
perceptions.



weet dat ik met liefde schreef  
tot je me ergens weer ziet  
als je tot die dag maar weet:  
zo dood ben ik ook weer niet.

Poet Derek Otte uses handwriting  
for all his poems. The message  
really comes to life through his  
handwriting. Especially in the online-  
context this approach obtains another great  
value; it stands out much more than  
other content. It breaths.

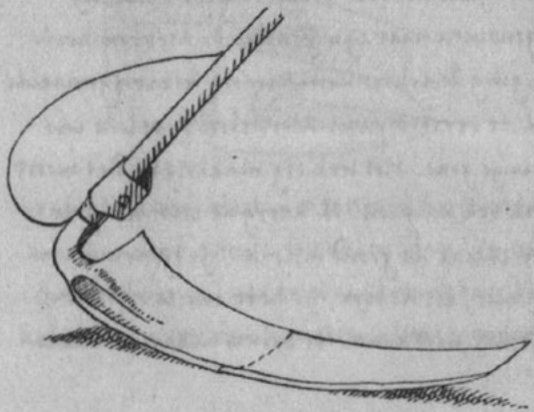
(SORRY DEREK FOR THE POOR  
TRANSLATION)

KNOW THAT I WROTE THIS WITH LOVE  
UNTIL YOU SEE ME AGAIN SOMEWHERE  
UNTIL THAT DAY YOU SHOULD KNOW  
I'M NOT THAT DEAD

**HAND**(writing)

Waarschijnlijk zou ik de boer toen al niet geloofd hebben als hij mij die zeis niet had gezegd. Zo slaagde hij erin mij mijzelf wijs te laten maken dat ik niet kon maaien. Hij hoefde er alleen maar voor te zorgen dat het wel mis moest gaan. Werkelijk een fantastische truc.

Hoe veranderde het bedrog in zelfbedrog?  
De sloven zaten zo hoog aan de wurf dat de man rechtop kon staan bij het maaien. Bij deze stand gleed de rug van het blad over de grond, terwijl de snede de grond niet kon raken.



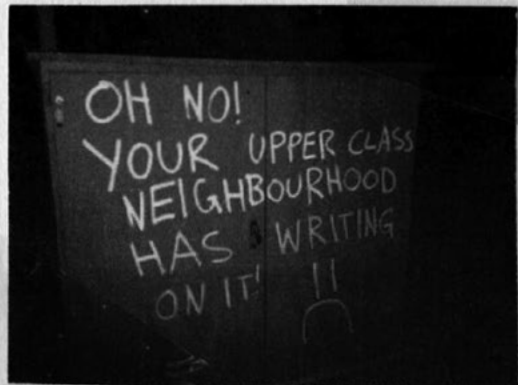
48

**G. NIORDZIJ**  
**ZEIS & SIKKEL 1979.**

**Gerrit  
Niordzij**

Proves another point:  
if different types of content  
come from the same hand,  
the message stays personal and  
stays focussed!

**BUT IF YOUR HAND IS NOT AS  
BEAUTIFUL AS GERRIT'S HAND...  
OTHER THINGS (LIKE PLACEMENT OF SURFACE)  
MIGHT MAKE YOUR POINT  
COME ACROSS.**





~~GEREEDSCHAP~~ MEDIUM

It's quite a clear memory,  
these first few strokes  
appearing from the broad nib  
onto ~~my~~ the paper in front of me.  
What a magic! Different widths in  
one single movement.

Green. The ink was green.  
It took a couple of tries before the  
first line came out properly,  
but when it was there,  
as said: MAGIC!

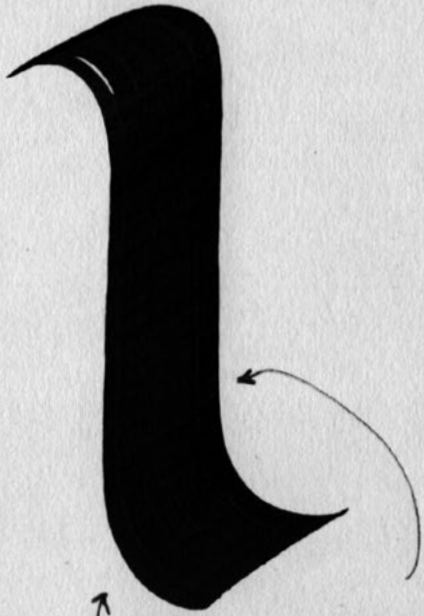


That evening I gave the first try  
to writing a letter with it.

The 'M' from the Motorhead logo,  
copied from the poster which was  
hanging above my desk. Instead  
of copying that logo by drawing,  
which I must have done dozens of  
times, I now could write it 😊

The tool that you use / choose dictates the shape of the letter. How you use this tool is what makes the trace interesting.

The tool (after some efforts or experiences) will become a part of the body, like an extension, that at some point grows on you.



For a young boy being a Proffitt writer this is exciting in a lot of ways! One of those being: Speed! Saving time.

MAKING THE LEFT AND THE RIGHT OUTLINES AT ONCE 😊

→ It's exactly that way of seeing that kind of dictates my appreciation for many arts and sports like painting, dance, skateboarding and music performances.

Related to the calligraphy it is similar. It's always cool to see someone being able to use a brush very controlled, but that doesn't make it 'interesting' as long as the how doesn't surprise me.

To be honest: the writing in stead of drawing the letters was a serious and fun answer to my impatience. I know, that's sounds like such a contradiction. That writing, or calligraphy even, which costs so much attention, practise and effort, could answer that impatience. From that moment on I only had to 'visit' one part of a page once.

↓ Could you elaborate more on that?



For me a serious & second booster of my interest for the brush (and so, writing) was the visit to Niels Meulman's exhibition in the basement of the POST CS building of the temporary Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam back then. After I had marveled at his graffiti work during my early teenage years, he suddenly but naturally came up with 'Calligraffiti' in 2006/2007. He showed ~~his~~ letters, words and sentences made with playful ease, controlled nonchalance and pleasant speed. In such a way that emphasizes the process rather than placing too much focus on the (possible) mastery of an 'end' product.

\* ANOTHER VIDEO TIP:  
JOB & ROEL WOUTERS:  
IF YOU COULD COLLABORATE



It also did something else important to me. It instantly took 'writing' out of a boring, corny corner into something I could deal with; the rawness of the streets, damp cellars and yet something museum-like at the same time.



Calligraffiti by Shoe (2007)  
Made with a pesticide spray  
documented on video.

Does a

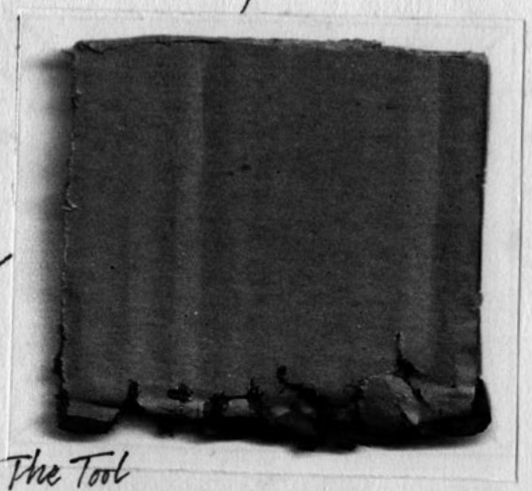
# SURPRISING TOOL

Always make a  
Surprising Gesture?

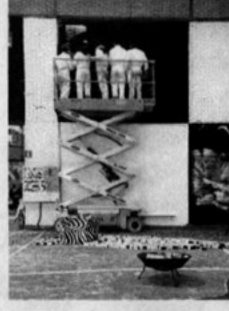


IT DEPENDS ON YOUR EXPECTATIONS

and your frame  
of references  
and your experience



The Tool



DURING OUR 'SPACE IS THE PLAY' PROJECT AT STEDELYK  
MUSEUM SCHIEDAM IN 2021 WE USED A SCISSOR-LIFT TO CREATE  
A FIVE-HEADED-HUMAN-AMPERсанд-IN-NEGATIVE-SPACE-PRINTER.  
(HANDED)

THE ATELIER  
BECOMES  
THE ARTWORK



ACE



THE MAKING OF  
THE MEDIUM  
IS THE MESSAGE



ADDING LENGTH

MORE PEOPLE

CUSTOM  
ADJUSTING  
THE HAIRS

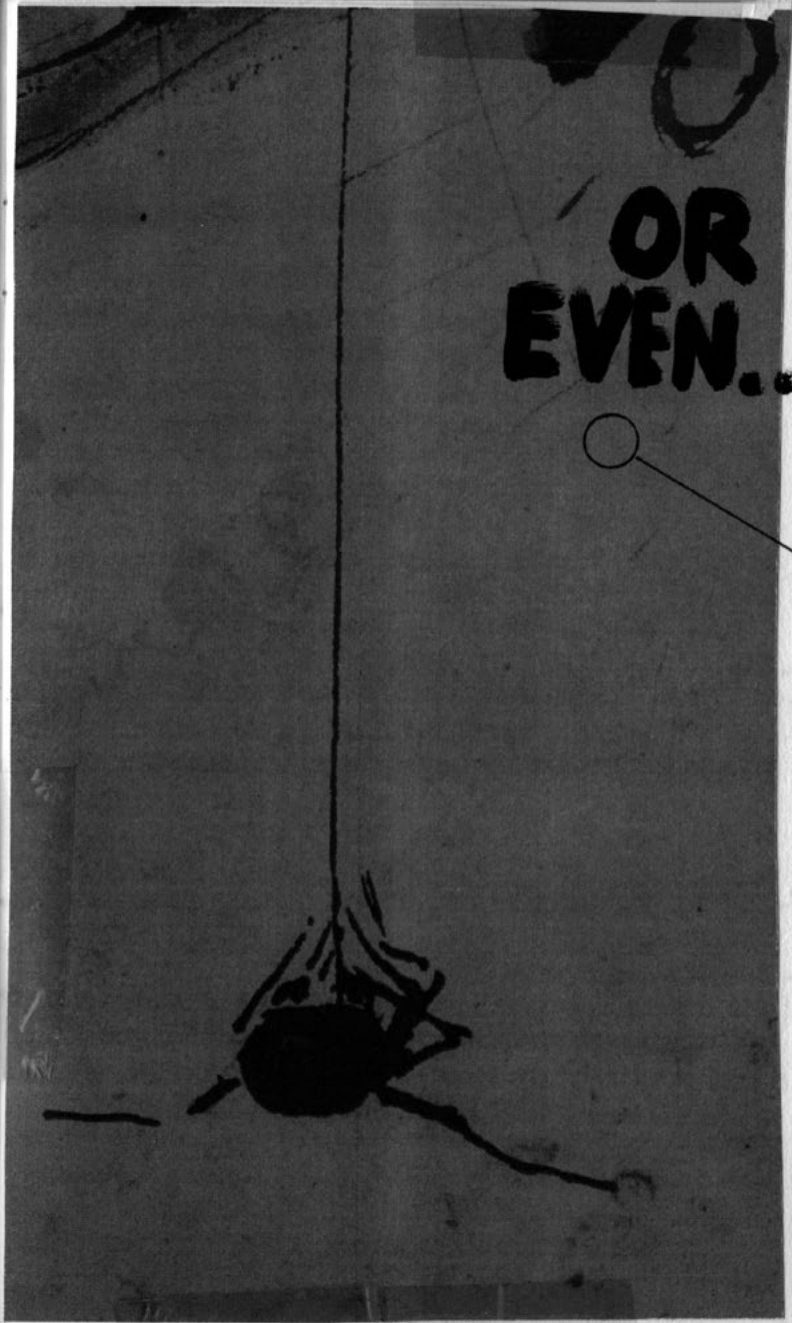
Extending  
the  
Brush

...SO MANY  
OPTIONS!

MAKING WRITING MORE  
DIFFICULT OR EASY

UNCONVENTIONAL  
TOOLS

OR  
EVEN..



# Discarding the Brush

an artist's brushwork. In this context, every change or innovation in the nature of the ink line was a revolution. Gao Qiwei himself, as well as his public and later finger painters, must have been fascinated by the peculiar characteristics of the line traced by the fingers or nails. The most distinctive of these characteristics is a certain degree of irregularity and unpredictability. In the case of large-format works the blackness rapidly pales because the finger, unlike the brush, is of course not equipped with a reservoir. Double lines are frequently formed when the nail and cushion touch the paper simultaneously. The thin lines traced by the nail are often ragged, the nail gliding less smoothly over the paper than the brush; the nail-line also tends to crumble, especially on less porous paper, because the ink is thick at the beginning of a line and cohesion causes it to form droplets. Because the ink is not spread as evenly as when brushed on the paper, wet work often exhibits the phenomenon of sharp black contours edging broadly inked lines or areas. This is because the pigment runs towards the edges, a phenomenon which is also observed when red wine is spilt on a white tablecloth. Another factor in finger painting is the challenge presented by the limited means, the challenge to create something new by means of self-imposed restrictions. The comparison comes to mind of etching and drypoint in western art. A considerable amount of pressure is needed in the drypoint process to incise furrows directly into the copper or zinc; the needle is liable to slip, the burr is difficult to control, producing all sorts of unpredictable effects when the print is pulled. This, however, is what constitutes the attraction of the technique, and the reason why artists like Rembrandt often preferred it to etching, a process regarded as perhaps too glib and smooth. One is also reminded of the revelation that left-handed painting was to Gao Fenghan who, as we shall see, was forced by a paralyzed right arm to switch hands.

Gao Qiwei's experiments with the possibilities of the fingerpainting technique are particularly noticeable in his early work. In the 1682 album from the Liaoning Museum (cat. 2) he made copious use of fingerprints (leaf 1), exploited the effect of combined nail and fingertip pressure (leaf 6) and scratched freshly inked areas with his nail to render the structure of a cliff-face (leaf 2). In the ensuing years he gradually developed a highly individual handwriting, more fluent than that of his early work, and with it a systematic technique. Throughout the *Treatise* Gao Bing comments on his grandfather's use of fingers and nails to produce various effects (paragraphs 6, 12, 25, 26, 28).

Gao Qiwei himself supplies information in more general terms, perhaps most concisely in the first four lines of a long poem:

GAO QIWEI DISCARDING THE BRUSH, SNEEKS

92

Exploring what is possible with your tool becomes very clear when you use a non-conventional (writing) tool.

Exploring the boundaries of a conventional writing-tool: this urge comes from being curious.

Going beyond what the previous craftsmen did with the tool.

# TRYING TO

TO ME: ANY OF THESE OPTIONS ARE FINE, AS LONG AS I CAN FEEL ENDLESS POSSIBILITIES.

SPIDER  
IN A WEB\*  
(DE-FAN)

PREVIOUS PAGE: IMAGE  
GAO QIWEI - 1686  
ALBUM OF BIRDS  
AND FLOWERS  
FINGER PAINTINGS IN  
INK AND PALE COLOURS  
ON PAPER. 25.8 x 37.5 cm

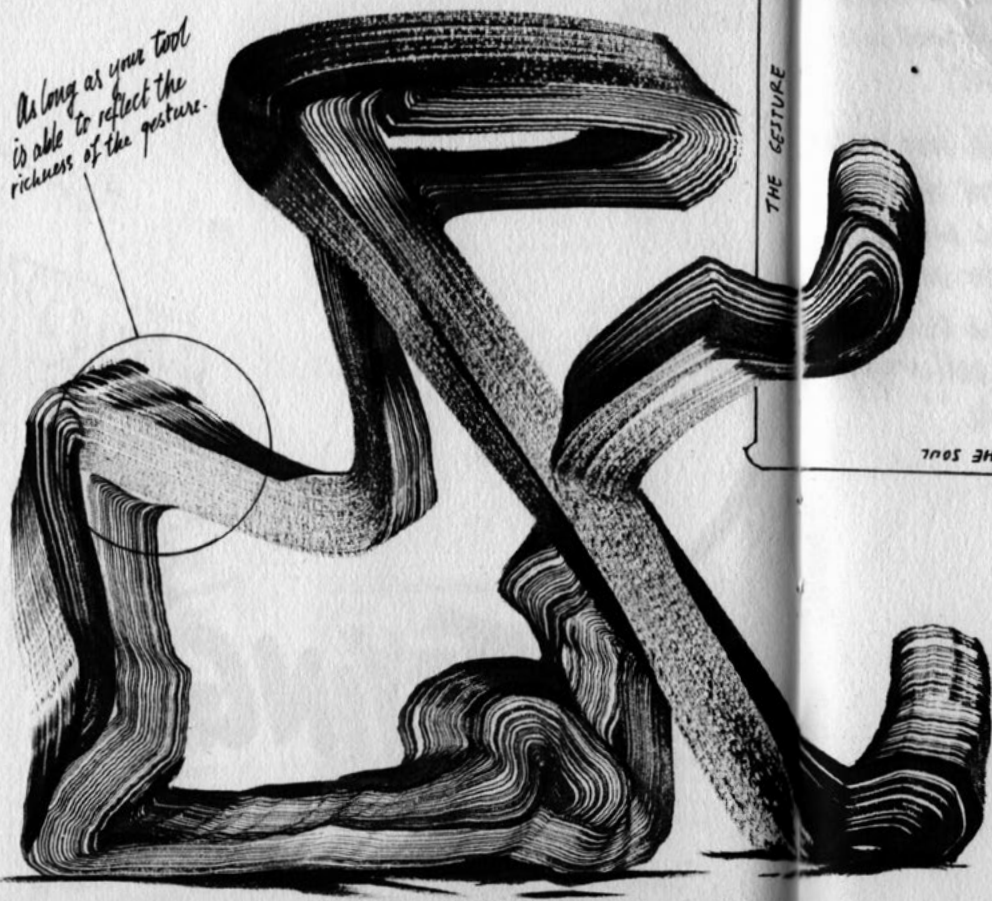
I paint with my hand

GAO  
QIPEI : With everything: nails, flesh, palm and top.

My hand begins: nothing is there yet

But when I am finished, my hand is worn out.<sup>15</sup>

As long as your tool  
is able to reflect the  
richness of the gesture.



THE TRACE

THE TOOL

THE GESTURE

THE SOUL

### III. "ORGANIC FORM" IN CALLIGRAPHY

On the most fundamental level, the belief that the written character is an embodied image that suggests something of the artist's comportment is supported by observing the way the medium captures quality of movement. Since brush and ink are readily influenced by variations in force, speed, and breath, the strokes themselves reveal much about the physical act of writing. This is evident in the conceptual and experiential frameworks used for criticizing calligraphy. Physiological metaphors are used in order to draw attention to the kinesthetic elements of the characters: flesh (*rou*,<sup>16</sup>), sinew (*jin*,<sup>17</sup>), bone (*gu*,<sup>18</sup>), blood (*xue*,<sup>19</sup>), vein (*mai*,<sup>20</sup>), and breath (*qi*,<sup>21</sup>).<sup>21</sup> Madame Wei's (272 - 349 CE) famous treatise, "A Diagram of the Battle Array of the Brush," states: "Calligraphy by those good in brush strength has much bone; that by those not good in brush strength has much flesh. Calligraphy that has much bone

but slight in flesh is called sinew-writing; that with much flesh but slight bone is called ink-pig ... Every writer proceeds in accordance with the manifestation of their digestion and respiration of energy."<sup>22</sup>

"Flesh," "sinew," and "bone" refer to the formal or structural elements of the characters, while "blood," "vein," and "breath" refer to their energetic qualities. The centrality of these concepts to criticism for Daoists and Confucians alike intimates that works of art are best understood in terms of a "process ontology." On this point François Jullien notes that "artistic activity was seen as a process of *actualization*, which produced a particular configuration of the dynamism inherent in reality."<sup>23</sup> This is especially clear in calligraphy, for in the dynamic process of writing a character, "a particular gesture is converted into a form, just as a particular form is equally converted into gesture."<sup>24</sup> The reciprocal process of absorbing the characters (through repetitious practice) and expressing them is contingent upon and reflects the work of a body that is continually being affected by and is continually affecting its social and physical environment. Each character is something of



2110 year old olive tree - Turkey

"Gestures" converted  
into form.

Can one convert  
these forms into  
gestures?

I would love to sit  
in front of this  
tree and try  
to capture  
the essence  
with a calligraphic  
gesture!

Looking at textures and  
structures makes one  
see the traces of time.

Or better, ~~and especially~~  
to bring the perspective

of the nowness, we are  
seeing the current state

of a process that is  
influenced by both

growth and decay/erosion.

In the act of calligraphy,  
the trace of the gesture is growing  
while the blank paper is decaying.





# SPELEN PLAY

WE HAVE TO  
SET YOUR

**RULES**

Can't we just start playing  
and figure out if we need  
rules later on?

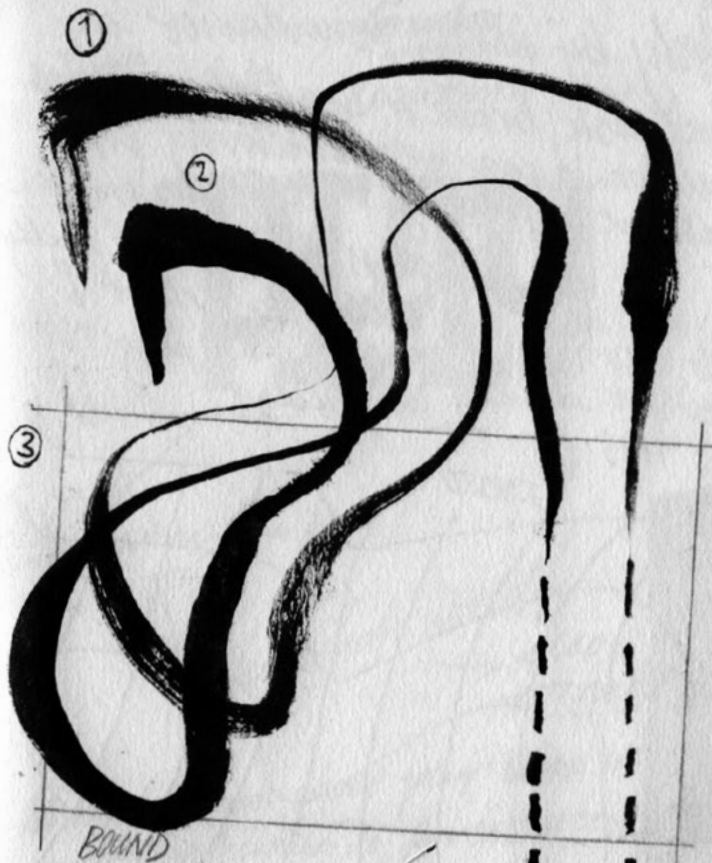


A simple principle animates these pages: the more we understand the limits on our freedom, the better placed we are to transcend them. We may well be less free than we like to think, but only through understanding the freedom we lack can we enhance the freedom we possess.

That's Okay, but I believe  
that a few (or many)  
limitations will facilitate  
the urge to be creative.

The limitations are  
often right in front  
of you. Like this page,  
a pen and their  
dimensions. When  
you "just start", you  
bump into them.

**!** Bounce back, fall,  
use that energy for the  
continuation of your  
movement.



ness, quality  
lity can be +  
he w

**WHAT  
HAPPENED  
HERE ?!**

1. RANDOM BRUSHMOVE
2. NEXT PERSON  
REACTING WITH A  
BRUSHMOVE
3. NEXT PERSON FRAMING

Only by setting boundaries you can <sup>then</sup> push, break or bend them. The question is can you collectively play, without agreeing on the rules together?

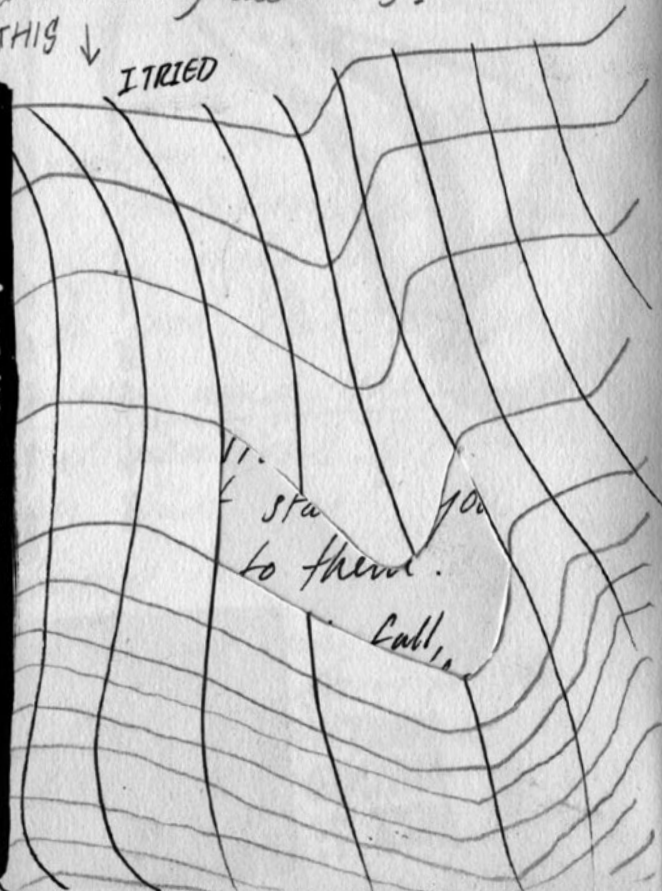
I guess then it's not really 'collective' right?

So does that mean you can't play without knowing the rules?

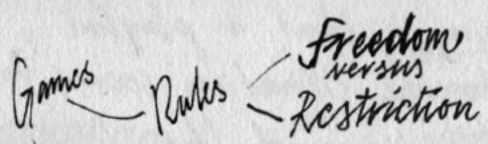
TRY THIS ↓

I TRIED

WHEN ALL PLAYERS OF THE PLAY HAVE DIFFERENT RULES? DO THEY PLAY TOGETHER?



sta go  
to them.  
Call,



# PLAY

Theatre (the play)

↓ the whole world! → also: everybody??

We tend to think about 'play' when we're consciously deciding to, for instance, play a game. Recently I'm more and more focussing on playfulness, the quality. This quality can be trained during playing games, like making a drawing/painting/playing an instrument etc. But then this quality can be taken into many everyday situations.

The nice thing is that a playful approach to the situation seems to create space around the thing itself. ~~Possibilities open up, flexibility increases, fun can be experienced...~~ There seems to be a similarity between that space created by playfulness and the space created by not identifying with thoughts and feelings. (Having a thought/being the thought) Personally I really enjoy the space around things.

JAZZ BAND AS  
ART COLLECTIVE

In this view again, music is a good metaphor for sound needs space to be heard to resonate. Although playing music or an instrument doesn't always come playful. A pre-written, composed and conducted piece, is it still a play?

AIR

TO BREATHE

it's just a game! 😊

WHITE

SPACE

A possible solution could be: 'playing' a competition without connecting any feeling to the score or outcome. SOUNDS TERRIBLE!

Why - in most fields of work - is playing not considered a professional act? In sports, the word play is used for a competitive interaction. Is this play? wordplay

# Cadavre Exquis

LET'S PLAY!

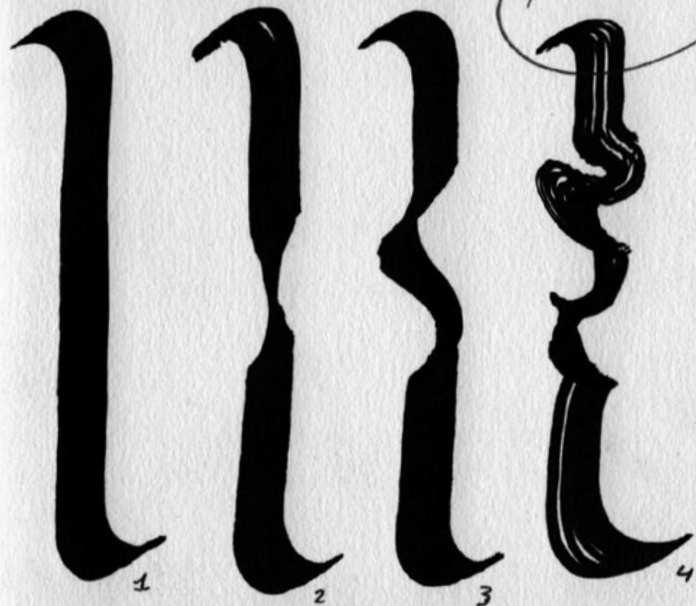
To play is to interact with the world around you, so that the people standing next to you, and they can't really see you, but are able to smell you in the wind. But just before the others arrived at the scene and directly started asking if we actually ever got any interesting results working like this, on which we could obviously only reply:

Why on earth do most people stop playing after reaching the age of nine? That's a rarity for most people.

So we celebrate the play, as it brings us closer to making something which is completely new for all of us. By replying to each other we define each other I guess.

# \*Stoked strokes

Which one is more Playful?



Within the sequence the last one appears to be most playful, as the stroke modulates the most extreme. It's only playful though because of its context and relationship with all of the other strokes. Without stroke no. 1, no. 4 means less. Every stroke here is as playful as the other. Together they form one.

AN EMPTY SHEET.

CADAVRE

(NEVER AS EMPTY AS YOU MIGHT THINK)





CADAVRE  
EXQUIS (XXL)

ROUBAIX 2022

Masking one layer at a time makes  
it possible to play this game on any  
surface you like! ☺

# WHY PLAY?

*And why do most people think that it's only for kids?*

58 *Traces, threads and surfaces*

is first painted on the spathe, using a feather dipped in white pigment. This is the most important line, which acts as a template for the rest of the pattern. Once it is done, additional lines are added in red, yellow and black. In a large, complex painting, such as for the façade of a ceremonial house, the painter starts from the top and works in rows. However, he always leaves a white line hanging like a string from the bottom of the designs on each row, so that he can take it up and continue it on commencing the next (Figure 2.10). As a result, all the rows of the complete work are connected together by continuous white lines (called *maindshe*). The lines in the other colours, by contrast, are discontinuous and serve only to highlight the white *maindshe* (ibid.: 89).



Figure 2.10 Abelam men at work on a painting. In the row on which they are currently working, the painters are picking up and continuing the white lines left hanging from the previous row. Photograph: Jörg Hauser. Reproduced by permission of Jörg Hauser and Brigitta Hauser-Schäublin.

*Hundreds of examples are available from different cultures and times, where playfulness plays a huge part in daily life. This one's taken from: 'Lines, a brief history' by Tim Ingold.*



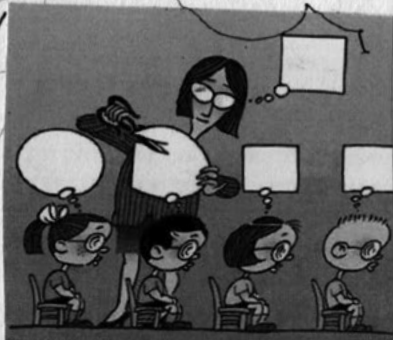
**LADY ALLEN HURTTWOOD**

*She fought her whole life for the right to play for children. Free and adventurous playfields, instead of mono-function playfields. Her ideas were often put aside as 'too dangerous', but recent studies have shown that free and adventurous playfields result in less injuries! Double win for Lady Allen and Playfulness!*

*5 year research in Houston, TX, 2009*

## The Godmother of Play

*According to Rudolf Steiner, due to the lack of play in schools, a new generation of people is awaiting us. Our will, less eager to play, less dreams, less urge to explore, less imagination.*





Because those who  
have lost their imagination  
swallow everything.  
-KO VAN 'T HEK-

2020 (NL)

HIGH ON TYPE  
PUBLIC WRITING  
PERFORMANCE ON  
THE STREETS OF  
EINDHOVEN

~~SAMENWERKEN~~ COLLABORATE

WRITING, CALLIGRAPHY,  
OR DRAWING  
ARE OFTEN  
VERY INDIVIDUALISTIC  
PRACTICES

Unfortunately...

*This is because*

HANDWRITING → HAND → BODY  
→ PERSON → INDIVIDUAL

**but**

*As a collective you  
can become one 'body'.*

*like a  
Superorganism*

THE WHOLE IS MUCH MORE THEN THE  
SUM OF THE PARTS

(I think that the whole is much  
less than the sum of its parts)  
→ Timothy Morton!

Just like a good conversation is more,  
than a succession of different sentences  
spoken by several people.

Yes!

INDIVIDUAL  
DOESN'T EXIST!

"Nothing (and also: nobody)  
stands on its own."  
- Henk Osterling

Scenius, or Communal Genius

Scenius is like genius, only embedded in a scene rather than in genes. Brian Eno suggested the word to convey the extreme creativity that groups, places or "scenes" can occasionally generate. His actual definition is: "Scenius stands for the intelligence and the intuition of a whole cultural scene. It is the communal form of the concept of the genius."

So, if there's no 'individual'; is everything then automatically "collective"?

Let's see the etymology;

in-divide-able,  
not able to be divided.

It's a weird word that in my opinion tries to teach an incorrect way of understanding the self.

Since reading the work of Henk Oosterling, I like to use interindividual  
↳ in between / relation

I hardly ever go into the studio with a work complete in my head. It emerges from communal activity.

Brian Eno

→ I like your proposal!  
It opens up a great way of looking at things / understanding our being.

Yet I have to answer with: No.  
Let's try to figure out:

~~When is a group of people~~  
What does it implicate to be a collective?

Before answering this question I'd like to share a few sentences from the book I'm currently reading.

'Web of Meaning'  
Jeremy Lent  
2021

NEXT  
PAGE

To share a common goal or an interest together.

OKAY!

?

BUT WHY  
WRITE COLLECTIVELY

Colonies of social insects like ants or bees are so highly cooperative, in fact, that they frequently are called superorganisms. Think of the classic Darwinian refrain: 'survival of the fittest'. It has an interesting ambiguity: the survival of the most competitive or of those that fit most successfully into their environment? We can conceive views of evolution now as a multidimensional force acting through both competition and cooperation at multiple levels - within the organism, in symbiotic relationships, within a species, between species and within an ecosystem. At each level, competitive and cooperative forces create their own dynamic tensions, while simultaneously impacting other levels. Meanwhile, the state of the ecosystem as a whole affects each of these relationships within it. Remember the concept of reciprocal causality, where parts of a system affect the whole while the system as a whole affect the parts?

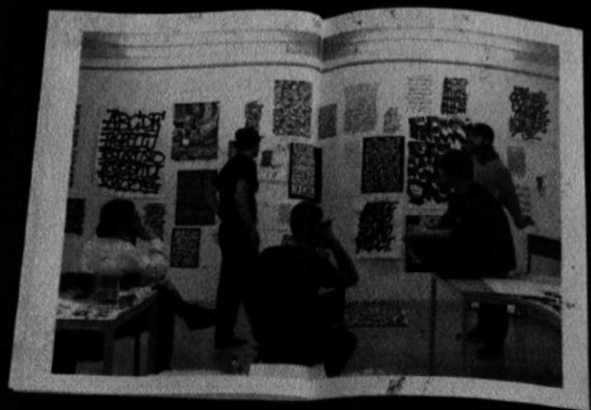
This is a classic example of how life itself is a complex, self-organized system acting on itself at multiple levels of scale.

the measure of collaboration  
is vulnerability.

Cargo Newsletter  
CN219 01-11-22

I can  
never do  
what we  
can do.

Picture was taken during  
the 'week 50' process. When we  
created the first HighonType Alphabet zine.  
Exactly 5 years ago: DEC 2017.





One thing  
defines


Another

**SO** WHY DO WE  
go along very well

**W-O-R-D**

To Articulate is to take position.  
A position only exist when  
there's multiple objects or  
bodies. Within our collective  
we inevitably have to take a  
position, create opposition.  
To create tension, excitement.  
One letter is formulated  
by another. They  
become a collective  
in a word.

**WRITE** shared interest **?**  
**COLLECTIVELY**



We played a contest show, the show master would roll the dice to select parameters for the calligraphy style. All three contestants would try at the same time, in front of a live audience. After all three rounds (gradually becoming more difficult) the audience could vote for selecting a winner.

2019.

BERLIN LETTERS CONFERENCE ABOUT TYPE

An example of us writing collectively.

COLLECTIVE

WE DID A LIVE CALLIGRAPHY SHOW DURING THE CONFERENCE IN STEAD OF THE LECTURE




FORMING A COLLECTIVE



When it comes to explaining why we started the collective we'd like to refer to the Wu-Tang Clan. When they, at their turn, refer to the Voltron robot-comic:

"WU-TANG OFTEN USED THIS AS A METAPHOR FOR THEMSELVES, A GROUP OF SOLO MC'S THAT COMBINED TO FORM AN INVINCIBLE RAP CREW" [GENIUS.COM](http://www.genius.com)

"SO, WHEN YOU SEE ME ON THE REAL  FORMING LIFE

"VOLTRON WAS A 80'S CARTOON ABOUT 5 SPACE EXPLORERS THAT



PILOTED ROBOTIC LIONS. THESE LIONS COMBINED TO FORM VOLTRON, AN INVINCIBLE SUPER-ROBOT THAT PROTECTED THE GALAXY."

VOLTRON

We started HighonType just to come together with like-minded people. To share knowledge and experience.



At the festivals there was a lot of meeting other people, sharing talking but mostly: doing!



In 2017+2018 we organised the



ALL EYES ON TYPE FESTIVAL.

Typically something you can't

do on your own. The festival evolved into other projects.

All eyes on Type festival

2017  
& 2018



← ↑ →  
ALL PICTURES BY  
LUUK ROORDINK

And making



COMMUNITY

→ But the philosophy stayed the same.



# MODULAR COLLECTIVE

*expanding!*

WITH PEOPLE COMING FROM IS VERY EXCITING FOR US, AS WELL AS IT IS FOR THE GUESTS.

THE HOW? ARE YOU PROJECT WE ARE EXPANDING THE COLLECTIVE WITH ONE OF THEM NOT TEMPORARILY WITH ONLY BEING

OTHER FIELDS AND DISCIPLINES. WITH ONE OF THEM NOT TEMPORARILY WITH ONLY BEING



PHILOSOPHY  
MUSIC &  
CHOREOGRAPHY

HOW?  
ARE YOU

'Alphabetum XII — How? are you' is a project by the collective High on Type. Within this project, a new generation of Dutch 'letter-writers' enters into a public dialogue with experts from various disciplines, such as dance, music and philosophy. During three open residencies, the collective questions the writing of letters, based on the seemingly banal question: How? As a result, the project gradually realises a total installation in the Alphabetum that aims to re-inspire visitors about writing.

Once learned, the writing of letters appears to be a well-organised and clear process. On closer inspection, however, it is often not that straightforward. To be able to write anything at all countless decisions are necessary. For instance format, colour, structure, composition, style, contrast, methodology, etc. are necessary choices for writing. And also questions such as why, how, with whom, with what, and when, are part of this process. While in spoken language the way in which is spoken (How?) naturally plays a central role, this is usually not the case with written language. Think of the difference between singing a song and writing down the lyrics. While calligraphy is about the shape of the letter, penmanship is a reproducing practice; an action based on copying previously created letterforms. Also in typography, there is no question of 'letter-writing', but only of making choices from already existing letters.

TEMPORARILY WITH  
ONLY BEING

EVERYWHERE EVOLUTORY

STEP SINCE LIFE BEGAN  
ON EARTH

WAS A RESULT

OF INCREASED COOPERATION BETWEEN  
DIFFERENT TYPES OF ORGANISMS

JEREMY LENT



История  
и география



# HOW? ARE YOU

## ARE WE MAKING THIS PUBLICATION



FRIDAY 16<sup>TH</sup>  
DECEMBER  
09:40 AM

We set ourselves some rules to make this publication. It has to be done in just this day\* So we started with a coffee and a brainstorm.



## PASS- ON BOOKLETS

13:12 The idea came to divide the topics we want to touch in different booklets in the size of the publication. One person starts and passes it on to the next.

This way of working will be  
 a simultaneous process of  
 combining our shared knowledge  
 (in a very spontaneous way)  
 in this publication. So that  
 we get the most out of the  
 team and the moment we  
 have together.



11:16

**ONE  
 ON ONE**

We find it  
 important  
 to not lose  
 richness in  
 the process of  
 scaling. So we  
 used booklets as  
 big as the final  
 publication.

"records made" at one sitting, sound so fresh now - because the rate of  
 discovery and the emotional tempo match those of the listener. What's  
 infuriating, though, is how fragile those fabrics are. I've noticed that,  
 trying to work on improvisations that have "something", they very  
 quickly dissolve into nothing the more attention they get. It's almost like  
 trying to reconstruct a very funny dinner party - you had to be there,  
 and it's impossible to isolate the chemistry of what really made it work."  
 - Brian Eno, A Year with Swollen Appendices: Brian Eno's Diary

**ALL IN**

13:53



**TOGETHER  
 NOW**

Indesign



NOTE!

EVENTUALLY: we had to work on this publication a bit longer than one day. So some of the content is added later, but still mostly chronological! 😊

# KATA

The thing is, it is very difficult to know oneself whether one is doing that or not, whether you mean what you do; and there is the other problem of the way you do it and whether sometimes you do more than you mean or you do less than you mean. It's very good if you can establish a language where it's clear that that is what you are doing - that you do what you mean to do.

- Jasper Johns

ALL TOGETHER NOW

When you work, you want a happy crew going down the road together. You need the ability to focus on things as a group. You need to concentrate on one thing at a time and not have a million different things distracting you. This capacity grows when people start meditating and diving within.

There's an expression: "Where the attention is, that becomes lively." So when you focus on a thing, it's almost as if you start it moving and vibrating. You say, "This is what we're going to do today, this is where we are, and this is what we want to accomplish." Then the work gets better and the group gets happier.

- Catching the Big Fish. David Lynch.

= vorm / Shape  
→ De manier van doen

The way of doing

IS THE PROCESS OF MAKING AS  
IMPORTANT AS THE OUTCOME?

→ How is importance measured?  
*Most important things can't be measured anyway.*

→ Aren't outcomes part of a process?  
*Probably another process starts when one is done.*

→ Since there is no outcome without  
a process, does this shine all the light  
on the process?  
*Seeing the outcome apart from the process seems  
impossible.*

THEN WHY IS THERE OFTEN SO MUCH  
FOCUS/EMPHASIS ON THE RESULTS OF THINGS?

**MONEY?**

**EGG!**

**ANALYZING  
OUTCOME**



REALTIME PHOTO  
FROM GUIDO AT WORK

And also: how?

# WHY IS LIMITING OUR TIME SO IMPORTANT FOR COLLECTIVE CREATIVE PROCESS

Sometimes restrictions get the mind going. If you've got tons and tons of money, you may relax and figure you can throw money at any problem that comes along. You don't have to think so hard. But when you have limitations, sometimes you come up with very creative, inexpensive ideas.

→ Well, in my believe, a very nice Dutch saying applies here:

## EEN KAT IN HET NAUW MAAKT RARE SPRONGEN.

This means something like: a cat in a narrow space makes funny jumps.

# INSIDE OUT

Catching the Big Fish  
David Lynch

I was listening to the radio one day when I was working on *The Elephant Man*, and I heard Samuel Barber's *Adagio for Strings*. I fell in love with this piece for the last scene of the film. I asked Jonathan Sanger, the producer, to get it. And he came back with nine different records. I listened to them, and I said, "No, that's not what I heard at all." All nine were completely wrong. So he went out and bought more. Finally I heard André Previn's version, and I said, "That's it." It was composed of the same notes as the others, of course, but it was the way he did it.

The music has to marry with the picture and enhance it. You can't just lob something in and think it's going to work, even if it's one of your all-time favorite songs. That piece of music may have nothing to do with the scene. When it marries, you can feel it. The thing jumps; a "whole is greater than the sum of the parts" kind of thing can happen.

Extremes?  
Super large space and time.

Makes you do something surprising OR

Limiting  
**Time or  
SPACE**

Doesn't matter

ARE YOU

High on TYPE

Try to live consciously

"We, at least, try to be vulnerable."

Powerful Question

NO WHAT, NO WHY, BUT HOW?

Good!"

Together we are

Something About Sensitivity

The how is the what.  
- Timothy Morton

WE

LIMITING  
TIME & SPACE

"Regard your limitations as secret strengths. Or as constraints that you can make use of."  
— Brian Eno



TO CREATE AN  
INTENSE CONTEXT  
FOR WORKING



**GO  
DEEP**

While committing to a certain challenge,  
(and allowing yourself the time and space required)  
your ideas and expressions can flourish when  
you dive into it deep enough.

IN THIS EXAMPLE:  
THIS IDEA ONLY CAME  
TO LIFE THROUGH A  
DEEP EXPLORATION OF  
POSSIBILITIES. (IN THIS  
CASE: BRUSH TEXTURES)

THIS CALLIGRAPHIC  
OUTPUT WAS MADE  
DURING 'WEEK 1'  
a high on Type  
Calligraphy Marathon



2019



OPEN. When your printer error or finished ink gives that nice texture. Welcome happy accidents, as they can improve the result. Be open to it! →

When making the illustration for the book **HARD OP** by **BABS GONS**, this was exactly what happened, the printer added something that resonated the essence of the poem. Something that I would have never come up with myself. Things like this are often discarded, but they are as much part of the process as the result.

SO

FACILITATE  
THE CHANCE  
FOR  
HAPPY  
ACCIDENTS!

"Whatever you now find weird, ugly, uncomfortable and nasty about a new medium will surely become its signature. CD distortion, the jitteriness of digital video, the crap sound of 8-bit - all of these will be cherished and emulated as soon as they can be avoided. It's the sound of failure: so much modern art is the sound of things going out of control, of a medium pushing to its limits and breaking apart. The distorted guitar sound is the sound of something too loud for the medium supposed to carry it. The blues singer with the cracked voice is the sound of an emotional cry too powerful for the throat that releases it. The excitement of grainy film, of bleached-out black and white, is the excitement of witnessing events too momentous for the medium assigned to record them."

- Brian Eno, A Year With Swollen Appendices



→ Taken from our collaboration with Jay Swansmith and Babs Gons 'Hard op' ATLAS CONTACT 2019



J U S T  
S T A R T

"Honor your mistake as a hidden intention."  
— Brian Eno



Okay, let's try that again, but this time good.





## Captions in order of appearance

### Writing

- Letman, *The Art and Lettering of Job Wouters*, Die Gestalten Verlag, 2012
- Mart Varik, *Villu Toots: 100 Book Covers*, John Neal Books, 2017
- Photograph by *High on Type*, West Den Haag, Alphabetum, 2022
- Photography by *Iwan Baan*, Dallas, Texas, United States, 2021
- Pin-Up Photograph of *Brigitte Bardot*, 1960
- Photograph of a *Window Cleaner*, Shutterstock, 2013
- Painting by Pablo Tomek: *White Window*, Ruttkowski;68, 2020
- Poem by *Derek Otte*, 2021
- Gerrit Noordzij, *Zeis en Sikkeld kunst van het maaien*, Bert Bakker, 1979
- Photograph of *graffiti*, Artist Unknown, Year Unknown

### Medium

- **Calligraffiti: The Graphic Art of Niels Shoe Meulman**, From Here to Fame, 2010
- Wallpainting by *High on Type*, Space is The Play, Glass-Hard, Opperclaes, Stedelijk Museum Schiedam, 2021
- Photograph by *Aad Hogendoorn*, Glass-Hard, Opperclaes, Stedelijk Museum Schiedam, 2021

- Klaas Ruitenbeek, *Discarding the Brush. Gao Qipei (1660 — 1734) and the art of Chinese finger painting*, Rijksmuseum/Snoeck, 1992,
- Eric C. Mullis, *The Ethics of Confucian Artistry*, The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism, Oxford University Press, 2007
- Photograph of *2110 Year Old Olive Tree*, Photographer Unknown

### Play

- Raoul Martinez, *Creating Freedom Power, Control and the Fight for Our Future*, Canongate, 2017
- Wallpainting by *High on Type*, Exposition Vacarme, La Condition Publique, Roubaix, 2022
- Tim Ingold, *Lines, A Brief History*, Taylor & Francis Ltd, 2016
- Portrait of *Lady Allen of Hurtwood*, Elliott & Fry, 1942
- Comic with *Speech Balloons*, Artist Unknown
- Wallpainting by *High on Type*, Windows to the World, Eindhoven, 2020

### Collaborate

- Henk Oosterling, *Waar geen wil is, is een weg*, Boom, Amsterdam, 2016
- Jeremy Lent, *The Web of Meaning Integrating Science and Traditional Wisdom to Find our Place in the Universe*, New Society Publishers, 2021
- High on Type, *Week 50 Zine*, Watchamacallit, Utrecht, 2017
- Performance by *High on Type*, Berlin Letters Conference, 2019
- Michael Lavine, Photograph of *Iron Flag Album Cover*, Wu-Tang Clan, Loud, Columbia Records, 2001
- Cartoon of *Voltron: Defender of the Universe*, Toei Animation, Japan, 1984—1985
- Photography by *Luuk Roordink*, All Eyes on Type Conference, Worm Rotterdam, 2018

### How?

- Photography by *High on Type*, Utrecht, 2022
- Brian Eno, *A Year With Swollen Appendices: Brian Eno's Diary*, Faber & Faber, 1996
- David Lynch, *Catching the Big Fish Meditation, Consciousness, and Creativity*, Tarcherperigree, 2016
- Studio of *High on Type*, Week 1 Residence, Soesterberg, 2019
- Babs Gons, *Hardop: spoken word in Nederland*, Atlas Contact, 2019
- High on Type, *Week 1 Zine*, Maison Riso, Nice, France, 2019

## Biographies

**High on Type** is a collective of five (graphic) artists that share a passion for the letterform. As individuals they explore their own visual language, through collaborating their language is amplified. Forms are made by writing, a very direct way of expression. The work is both the act as the trace left behind. Through collective experiments, they stretch boundaries of the visual vocabulary. The collective goal resonates, finding new possibilities for expression through writing.

**Guido de Boer**, (born 1988) is an independent visual artist with a background as designer. His work consists of images that you can read and texts that you can experience visually. His work is large, monumental and handmade and therefore expressive, but can also come across as graphic. In addition to his artistic practice, Guido is a teacher at the Royal Academy of Art in The Hague.

**Hans Schuttenbeld**, (born 1991) is a multi- and interdisciplinary maker who has called himself a psychedelic poet since the summer of 2021. His work draws on his trained skills of calligraphy, painting, drawing, designing and thinking, among others. A main theme he both derives from and works toward is wonder. In 2020, he received a Stipendium for Emerging Artists from the Mondriaan Fund to stimulate his artistic research and collective practices.

**Ivo Brouwer**, (born 1992) is a type and graphic artist based in The Hague. His work compiles of experimental type and graphic patterns made by translating tactile methods to digital environments and the other way around. He holds a Master's degree in Type Design from KABK Royal Academy of Arts The Hague. In 2022, he received a fund for Talent Development by the Creative Industries Fund NL.

**Vincent de Boer**, (born 1988) is an artist with a background in calligraphy. In his ongoing explorations on the boundaries of language you can feel the concentration with which he works and the mastery of material and technique. From this basis, he creates a variety of works, on paper, murals and performances. His animated film *The Stroke* won the debut prize at the Netherlands Film Festival.

**Henk Oosterling** is a Dutch philosopher and writer. Until 2018, he worked as an associate professor of philosophy at Erasmus University Rotterdam. His work focuses on sustainability and social issues, such as pedagogy.

**Sigrid Stigsdatter Mathiassen** is a choreographer, performer and vocalist. As a maker, Sigrid uses both text and movement as a tool to blur the line between reality and imagination.

**Danny Wolfers** (Legowelt), is an electro producer and DJ from The Hague with international fame. His music spawns a varying range of sub-genres.

**Akiem Helmling**, is partner of the type-collective *Underware* and founder of the *Alphabetum*. He is regularly lecturing about type, design and art at universities and events worldwide. As a critical advisor within the art center *West Den Haag* and together with *Thijs Lijster* he initiated the *IKK, Instituut voor Kunst en Critiek* in 2016. (*Institute for Art and Critique*)



The **Alphabetum** is an artistic space to explore the formative and formal aspects of language. These aspects are mostly considered separate. Typographers and type-designers are primarily focused on the letterform and writers mostly do not pay attention to the forms of the letters they form into words. The ambition of the Alphabetum is to reveal that these two properties of written language are much more interlinked than is commonly acknowledged. A letter is a letter because it resembles a letter; and because it resembles a letter it is a letter.

Joseph Beuys said that every human being is an artist. Hans Hollein translated this idea into space and time, suggesting that everything is architecture. John Cage proposed that everything we do is music. Would it therefore not be acceptable to declare that every thing is type? When we look at art, music and architecture from a more general point of view, we see that all three disciplines have emerged from the languages we created. We might even argue that art, architecture and music are themselves languages. It is noteworthy that Beuys's, Hollein's and Cage's statements are not formulated in art, architecture and music, but in letters, forming words, combined in statements. Ludwig Wittgenstein once said that the limits of our language are the limits of our world. Could it also be the case that the limits of the alphabet are the limits of our language? This would bring us back to the typographic tautology. A letter is a letter because it resembles a letter, and because it resembles a letter, it is a letter.

The Alphabetum, inaugurated in February 2019, is part of the program of the national art institution West Den Haag.

**How? are you**

**Alphabetum XII**

High on Type

Guido de Boer, Hans Schuttenbeld, Ivo Brouwer, Vincent de Boer

in collaboration with

Danny Wolfers, Henk Oosterling, Sigrid Stigsdatter Mathiassen

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**ALPHABETUM XII**  
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