

proj 1 | monogram creation

Students will use a combination of two or more letters to create individual monograms. This project explores typography, hand-lettering, and the fundamentals of logos.

objective Typography is at the heart of good graphic design, but many non-designers automatically believe this means choosing a font on a computer and typing. Typography, like all design, is about space as much as shape. The interaction between letterforms is as important as the letterforms themselves. Then the solid grouping of forms that appears when this skill is applied is also an excellent introduction to creating logos. All work is rendered by hand in this project with basic tools. Hand lettering is a style that is trending now, but does not require knowledge of design programs or computers.

At the conclusion of this project, realize that space is as important as shape when it comes to typography. As the legendary designer Massimo Vignelli (1931-2014) stated,

*We think typography is black and white. Typography is really white.
It's not even black. It is the space between the blacks that really makes it.
In essence, it's like music. It's not the notes. It's the space between
the notes that makes the music.*

materials Provided: Grid Paper, Tracing Paper, White Paper
Required: Pencils, Erasers, Ruler
Optional: Colored Pencils and Sharpener; Ink Pens; Paint if you want to get crazy

overview

- For each of the following steps, do not rush. It is expected that you will go through a phase of boredom and into one of involved problem-solving and exploration as you evolve from **writing** letters to **drawing** shapes.
- To fully explore solid visual weight created by contained space, do not allow any shape like a circle or rectangle to be drawn around the letters in an attempt to force grouping.
- Do not look online for any examples until after you begin to see the shape of the spaces around letters. Otherwise, instead of problem-solving, you will inevitably copy what already exists.
- Keep shapes between 1 and 2 inches on the longest side until the final step.
- If color exploration is desired, it should not be used until the final step.

steps

- 1 Write letters in normal handwriting on plain white paper. Explore print and/or cursive in uppercase and/or lowercase.
- 2 Begin concentrating on just 2 or 3 letters. As this project asks for a monogram, it is assumed students will use the initials of one's name, 3 letters are often more difficult than 2, so it is ok if the middle initial is eventually removed.
- 3 Taking these 2 or 3 letters, create more substantial forms by creating thicker letters. This step should not take long.

GQS → GQS

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- 4 Now play with styles (and therefore, shapes), each time doing this with the entire grouping of the letters. Suggested formats include: thick block letters, script, balloon, swirls, geometric, condensed, skewed, and interlocking.
 - 5 Take a break from drawing. Do the following:
 - See provided examples of monograms. Samples used in class: https://www.pinterest.com/nikki_arnell/monograms/
 - Notice how you are now “drawing” the letters as prescribed shapes vs. writing.
 - See how space itself becomes a shape.
 - We will discuss/review positive vs. negative space and the Gestalt Principles of Closure and Continuous Line.
 - 6 Grid and tracing paper will be provided, though neither is required as you begin exploring on your own. KEEP GOING - even if you become frustrated or bored. We will review the following:
 - Show how solid black vs. halftones of gray can create layering.
 - Why no color is allowed yet.
 - Consistency in space and shape should be used. Grid paper is especially helpful for this.
 - Identify how strong monograms have visual weight. See how this translates into logos with letters in the mark.
 - 7 Work and explore. Talk to your fellow students. Engage and suggest alternatives. Do not be stuck to a form if it isn’t working. If you are quick to finish one, create another.
 - 8 (*Optional*) Only after thorough exploration of shape and halftone layering should color be introduced. It is not necessary and is sometimes a crutch to a poor form. Monograms, like logos, should be successful in black and white. However, if you would like, recall color theory and how colors relate to each other.
 - 9 When forms are finalized, use tracing paper to draw a finished version. This is not busy work, even if you created a tight version already. Instead, it is further exploration into the details of the form itself. It is also possible to demand an enlarged version of the original to be created.
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- 10 Scan image at 300%, 300 DPI, RGB. Save as a JPEG, specifically as YOUR LAST NAME_PROJ1.JPG. Directions for using the scanner in AA204 will be available on the class Facebook page, but you do not need to use it if you have access to another. Just be sure the specs listed above are followed.
 - 11 “Clean” file in Photoshop so that the background is either white (no extra marks!) or transparent. Save as YOUR LAST NAME_PROJ1.PSD.
 - 12 Place this in our shared Google Drive folder for this class.

schedule *Wed Aug 22nd:*
*First day of class. Intro Lecture. Begin **Software Review**, which is*
DUE Wed Aug 29th 11am in the shared Google Drive folder for this class.

Fri Aug 24th:
Monograms workshop in class for this project. Be sure to show up with all required materials and be ready to work!

Fri Aug 24th - Wed Aug 29th:
Refine your monogram and/or try more! Also finish Software Review.
YOU HAVE FIVE DAYS. USE THEM.

Wed Aug 29th:
Review monograms in groups. Scan work into digital file and clean up in Photoshop (but keep the original artwork!).

DUE by Fri Aug 31st, 11am:
Place the PSD file in shared Google Drive folder for this class.

evaluation You will be graded on the following:

- Directions were followed accurately with absolutely no errors.
- Monogram is hand-rendered neatly.
- Ideas successfully conveyed per objective via composition and awareness of positive/negative space.
- Successful exploration into shapes vs. space.
- Final monogram has visual weight.
- Correct use of Photoshop.
- Ambition - How much did you challenge yourself? Did you plan your time well?
- Cleanliness and Presentation.
- Participation in class discussions and critiques.
- Helpful to fellow students.

Extra credit possibilities:

- > Multiple versions of final high-quality monograms.
- > Exploration into color or ink.
- > Create vector art from scanned image via manually tracing or a clean auto trace.