

Nederland & Europa

3.1 A quickly written but clear word which shows the significant parts of each letter formed by one stroke. For example: the first e, built up out of two strokes. *e*

Whereas the word 'land' is made up out of just one stroke. *land*



3.2 Two kinds of letter are shown here. The a is written: each significant part is made with one stroke. Writing is very direct, with no chance of correction. The g is drawn: built up out of numerous strokes made carefully next to each other. Drawing takes much more time, to consider and check the slowly growing form.

3 The three ways of making letters

There are just three kinds of letters: written, drawn or 'lettered', and typographic. They follow from and are defined by their method of production: writing; drawing or 'lettering'; and all the methods by which typographic letters are generated. The complications behind this strict division, particularly in the second category, will be explained in what follows.

Written letters can be used only during the process of writing itself: the moment of production and of use is one and the same. If I write some letters, make photocopies, then cut up and paste some of these letters together, then this process leaves writing behind, and becomes lettering. Writing only happens when you make letters with your hand (or another part of your body) and when every significant part of the letter is made in one stroke. In writing, whole letters, even whole words, can be made in one stroke [3.1, 3.2]. This process of writing is not limited to pen and paper. You can write with a brush on stone, or with a stick in sand on the beach, or, if need be, with the tip of your nose in the whipped cream on your birthday cake. So this process of bodily making letters that consist of one stroke is called writing. Please do not call it typography, just because it happens to use letters.

Lettering takes a step beyond writing. When doing lettering you always use drawn letters. These are letters whose significant parts are made of more than one stroke. The term 'drawn letters' reminds us again of pen and paper. The scope of lettering is of course much greater than the letterforms one can draw on paper. It also takes in large neon letters on buildings. Letters cut on gravestones are lettering too. It is impossible to cut the whole or the significant part of a letter with just one blow. But you can scratch a letter with one bodily movement, and then that has to be termed writing.

send you with separate post. The students' works you see in it were done during the same period, when the Bauhaus was in Dessau. But they are much better, more serious than the Bauhaus works. Above all they are more fundamental, the approach is modern, and timeless. There is an idea behind it.

Not very encouraging news, I am afraid; I spoke to Haru: whilst they were very keen on the project before he spoke to us about it, somebody 'put the lid on it' (as Haru said) + he is busily trying to take it off again.

This means inevitably long delay (profuse apologies from #2) and he puts his chances of success at this moment no higher than 20-25%.

Two samples of writing. The first (3.3) is an experienced hand that produces - without neglecting speed - a classical humanist italic. The second (3.4) is a very common scribble: meant only for a short life and for one reader.

Another great difference between lettering and writing is the fact that in writing there is no possibility of correction. One of the essential characteristics of lettering is the much sought-after possibility to reconsider and correct. Lettering seems to have more in common with typography than writing does, because, in much lettering work, the letterforms look very much like printing types. But this is a false connection. Lettering does indeed stand between writing and typography, but only because of the fact that you can move its letters around after they have been made. For example, lettering is all that you can do with rub-down letters, however 'typographic' they may look. Rub down the word 'typography' from a sheet of Helvetica letters and this still has nothing to do with typography. Neither does it have anything to do with writing: the letters are drawn and not written. Letters rubbed down to make words may, in skilful hands, look typographic; but the spacing and alignment is determined by hand, and this defines the process as lettering.

In typography, the composition of the word, as well as the making of the letters, is regulated by machine-fabrication. This is so even in the simplest case, of composing metal type by hand. The bodies of the types and the spaces ensure this dimension of machine-fabrication; as does the setting-stick, which works as an elementary machine. The system extends beyond the word: to the line, to the whole column or page of text. The size and position of appearing elements (i.e. visible when printed) can be exactly specified. This is done with a measuring system that is particular to that machine, or with a more generally used system. As the word 'specified' indicates, this information can be given to someone else to carry out, and the process can be repeated exactly on another occasion. These two things are natural to typography, but are essentially impossible in writing and lettering.

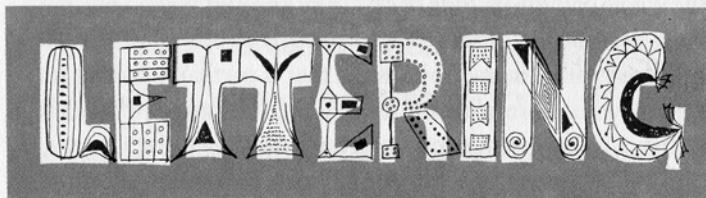
Writing, lettering and typography have in fact very little in common with each other, except that all three processes use the signs that we call letters. Each process gives a certain visual character to its output. And the outputs of all three processes are con-

strained by the limits of the human perceptual system. Of course, writing and lettering are also limited by the manual skills of the writer or letterer.

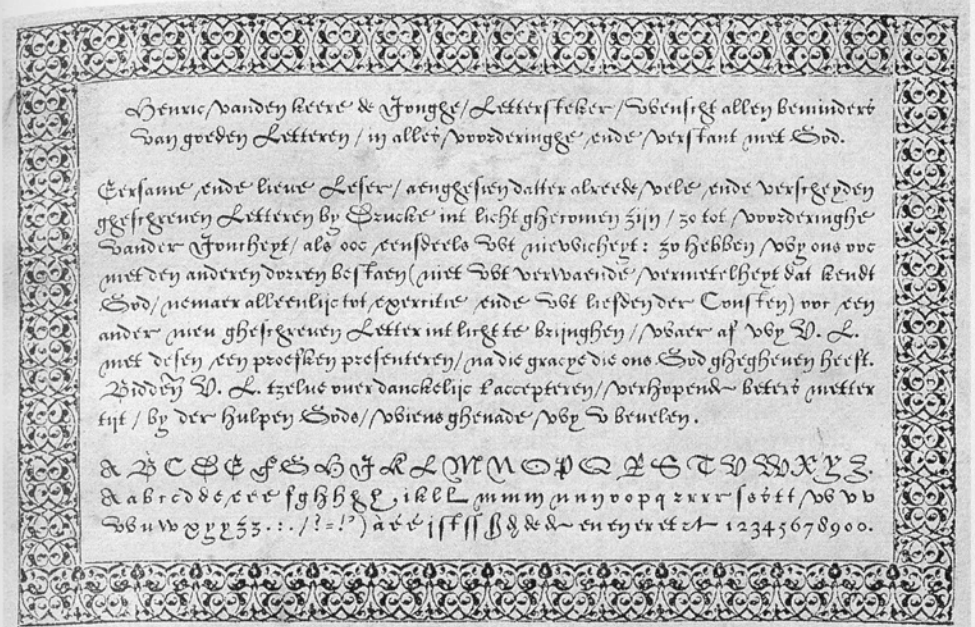
These three categories may not be absolutely separate from each other. The more experience you have, the more exceptions to the distinctions you will find. And a further fundamental distinction between typographic and other characters will be made in the next chapter. So an absolute or theological definition is not the point. But these definitions are meant as working guidelines, as a way of understanding essentials.

Each of these mediums has its own circumstances and character, its own scope and limits, its own freedoms, its own history. All of these things should be understood and cared for. I think the three mediums should not be mixed: at least not in ignorance.

A new printing type



Two samples of lettering. One (3.5) by W.A. Dwiggin, uses all the possibilities of reconsideration and correction that lettering offers. The result is some very 'typographic' looking words. The other (3.6) by Imre Reiner is pure lettering, not trying to be anything else.



SHADED

Two samples of typography. The first (3.7) is a *civilité* type cut by Hendrik van den Keere: an imitation of a polite handwriting style of its time (c.1570). The second (3.8), Jonathan Hoefler's *Egiziano Filigree*, clearly wants to imitate commercial hand-lettering of the nineteenth century. But both are fully typographic letters: text set in them can be repeated exactly, provided the right specification is given. This, and only this, distinguishes typography from writing and lettering. For a translation of Van den Keere's text, see p.184.