THIS BOOK IS A READER COPY.
IT MAY CONTAIN ERRORS.
IT WILL EVOLVE INTO A LARGER PUBLICATION
IF THIS READER
GENERATES THE INTEREST WE HOPE.
IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN SUPPORTING THE RESEARCH
FOR ANY SUBSEQUENT, EXPANDED EDITIONS
WE ARE VERY OPEN TO CONFRATERNIZATION
AND COLLABORATION.

DECLARATION OF 6 INTENTIONS

1. HAND-MADE LETTERING STYLES ARE HEREBY DECLARED FONTS.

The consensus among orthodox students of typography considers reproducibility of a character set, in exact proportions and a quickly executable scale, essential for said set to be denominated a font or typeface. We believe that this definition is incomplete. It does not take into account other factors that also contribute to a the designation of character collection as an accepted "typeface." For example, widespread recognizability of a character set by its appearance and/or a commonly used term used to signify it. Or reasonably similar applications of one text, in some cases even to common formats and surfaces. These factors would define an object's reproducibility as the adherence to a flexible average of a set of measurements that allow for variations but do not compromise the object's recognizability.

SLOW TYPE

In the Philippines, there are character sets that go by specific names (Henking, San Miguel, Single Stroke), employed only by sign painters and possibly a few people in their direct network. Also, certain character sets are employed homogenously to specific media (public trasnport vehicles, store signs), which thus can give rise to names that might not be commonly used, but are commonly understood. If you talk about the Taxi Aircon font, sign painters will understand that you are referring to the script painted on the rear doors of passenger cabs. Cubao Ilalim Ibabaw, referring to signs placed on the windshields of buses that ply routes along EDSA highway, would also be understood. San Miguel font is an example of how this sort of arbitrary terminology becomes standard: it refers to the Old English style used on the bottle of San Miguel beer, and quite a few sign painters around Metro Manila call this font San Miguel.

There is also the curious case of Assumption College, an girl's school that, at least up until the 1990s, educated students to use a distinctive style of handwriting. Their penmanship is characterized by round and angled flourishes escpecially on capital letters, and most especially in the A. These girls are instantly recognizable through their penmanship, not just by other Assumptionistas but by students of many other institutions as well. The fact that each student might apply a slightly different execution (the human element) to her own interpretation of the calligraphic style does not diminish its recognizability. The fact that generations of students of the college, from the 60s to the 90s, employ the same writing style means that this hand-made typeface has been reproduced on a large scale. Reproducibility is defined in the dictionary as the average between recorded measurements taken by different people or measuring techniques. In the case of slow type, this median in more ample, allowing for more variations within the limits of recognizability.

It would seem that the typographic definition of reproducibility understands it tense, machine-like terms that belittle human-centric timeframes and skill. Slow type is considered inferior to mechanical and digital processes. This is not necessarily true. A video on YouTube featuring a Brazilian sign painter creating price posters for different fruits and vegetables illustrates the point quite well. He creates each poster at a speed of approximately 1 minute and 15 seconds, probably faster than a computer printing out that density of ink for characters of that scale. The typeface he uses is recognizable and easy for him to execute. The current machine-oriented definition of reproducibility also overvalues the absolutely identical perfection of non-human typefaces, which register differences in their final form due to screen resolution, color calibration, wear of type casings, amount of ink applied, ink and printing machine quality, file compression and many other factors. It forgets that machines are also finite, and that the ways in which we store and reproduce data are likewise imperfect. In either case, machine or hand-printed, the occurrence of slight variations do not make the typefaces less iconic or take away their identity.

The current definition of what is and isn't a typeface is furthermore discriminatory of countries like the Philippines, wherein sign painters are the only known letter builders. Here, typography may not be learned at university except in infrequent workshop cycles. There are no foundries to speak of. Since Filipino languages and

dialects were forced to conform to Roman letterforms during Spanish colonization, the lives of our languages—except for a scant few tribal alphabets that still exist in small indigenous groups—do not depend on the digitalization of an alphabet. There is no real urgency for us to overcome technical backwardness and create our own digital types. If a Dutch, English, French or American person can do that for us, why bother? As a four-times colonized nation (by the Spanish, American, Japanese and British, in order of length) this willingness to relinquish power to a foreign master is not unfamiliar to us. Colonizers frequently mutilated local languages into Roman type because it was a powerful way to subject natives to their foreign agendas. Languages and their words adopt a different significance if they are part of an imposed typeface, metal or digital, especially in a post-colonial context. Languages were imprisoned or decimated, so native identites then lost their oratorial/spiritual power. Without autochthonous forms with which to self-represent, the integrity of a culture is lost. In the South American models of Spanish colonization, indigenous languages all but disappeared for this and many other reasons. In the Philippines, Tagalog and other dialects succumbed to Spanish creolization and colonial inferiority complex. The high-speed reproduction of these post-colonial forms of text and language—bastardized in both form and meaning—was a way to make the colonial subjugation process quicker. This mentality persists until today, in our willingness to accept Western representations of our characters.

If we go by established canons of what constitutes reproducibility as a make-or-break requisite to achieve font-ness for characters and typographer-dom for their makers, this does not allow folk letters to organize into foundries and help preserve cultures, identities or even languages. We propose the expansion and more stratified classication of typeface categories (slow type being the first of them) so as not to diminish the contribution that sign painters make to the field of typography and to the richness of culture on a global scale.

But perhaps the most powerful argument that justifies our referral to sign lettering styles as typefaces or fonts is this: the words "font" and "typography" provide a legitimacy that vernacular letters deserve. Sign painters feel beaten down, psychologically and economically, by the rise of computer graphics and the dreaded plastic tarpaulin sign. Their way of life is disappearing. They are furthermore not sufficiently recognized for their craft, which is highly underpaid and dismissed by the academic and

artistic communities. Legitimizing their practice with these terms might provide an avenue for self-empowerment.

FAST TYPE

The incarnations of digital and mechanical typefaces we use today, according to the definitions already established by many other writers. Google has some of the answers.

HYPER TYPE

New technologies already allow people to modify existing typefaces in size, proportion, and appearance with relative speed, or create entirely new ones (e.g. fonts out of your handwriting). They also may allow one to create digital "frankenstein" typefaces at will, albeit under imperfect circumstances: they either require great diligence to copy and paste and locate each letter on a "surface," like a collage or stencil reproduced by digital means; or rely heavily on software that requires complex knowledge and expensive hardware to operate, and is only reproducible by a few privileged people. As technology evolves at exponential speeds, there is the need to define one more category of fonts that might take into account all the possible permutations. Perhaps in the future, fonts might always have the option to incorporate motion and Microsoft clip art-like acrobatics, in the form of animation filters. Each font would not be judged then by the reproducibility of one particular "frame," but of a succession of frames of different effects. They might be easily personalizable, much like photos can be filtered and retouched with intuitive controls on Instagram. Or maybe they'd all turn into telekinetic fonts, translated by computers that read our minds. They would go beyond assigning your thought a preordained shape like Helvetica, but also interpret mental calligraphies similar to handwriting. These could be used as security keys to prove you're not a robot, or just as a warm-blooded element to make the transition from handwriting to brainwriting a bit less dehumanizing.

We will, or should, return to human significance in the remix-heavy, personalised, generative future that is already upon us. Hyper fonts then would be a mixture of the personalised aspect of slow fonts and the dispassionate regularity of fast fonts, sophisticated by the additional dimensions of time and motion.

2. THE HAND-MADE TYPEFACE IS IMPORTANT IN THE PHILIPPINES. IT IS AN INDICATOR THAT COULD LEAD TO DECOLONIZATION OF OUR (AESTHETIC) IDENTITY.

In other countries whose languages are married to Roman letters by default, or where a native alphabet is in prevalent use and at least in the process of digitalization, the importance of sign painting or hand lettering is not as urgent. They are romantic yet somewhat anachronistic tail ends of the non-digital yesteryear. In the cases where the languages and their scripts are not in danger of extinction, sign painting is not a living link to textual self-representation, or a code by which to deconstruct our own (visual) identity, one that 400 years of colonial rulers has *pastiched* to the point of confusion. Because there are fewer and fewer contemporary links by which to decipher the Filipino condition, and how it manifests on the surface (aesthetics) in reaction to what is of the spirit (identity), we have decided to study with focus and care what is a highly underestimated field: vernacular typography.

Unlike other investigations into native, non-occidental visual representations of language (typefaces), we cannot say this Filipino-centric field of study is important because it would preserve a language and further education and literature in its own vocabulary. But we can say that developing slow type, so that they may eventually graduate into fast fonts, might help forge a stronger sense of local identity in its aesthetic representations. The Filipino, by nature, attributes high importance to ornamentation, to external symbols of his position in society (success, conformity, reputation, fortune) and personal character traits (talent, likability, virtues). This is a pre-colonial attitude, common to many tribes and subgroups, such as the Maranao, the Waray, the Igorot and the Badjau. Study of aesthetics is, in this context, of prime and very native cultural significance.

3. DOCUMENTATION, INVESTIGATION AND CONFRATERNIZATION.

These are the core values that we intend to espouse, through all of our activities.

Folk fonts are rarely documented by their makers. The first step towards building an academic and studious interest in this field is gathering data for analysis, and for use by the sign painters themselves.

This collection of published data, which we hope to keep expanding, is a foundation for future investigations into the practice of folk typography in the Philippines. This

research would be extrapolatable to typographical current in other places.

In the bid to experiment and disseminate information, we welcome the collaboration of others, from anywhere, who show critical interest and sensitive respect for our local characters.

4. ANYONE THAT COLLABORATES WITH US BECOMES A MEMBER OF THE FFF AND THE INSTITUTE FOR INFINITELY SMALL THINGS.

In another project, members of the FFF belonging to The OCD collaborated with the Boston-based "research and instigation" collective of artists, The Institute For Infinitely Small Things. Their mission statement says that any person who collaborates with them becomes a member of TIFIST and can do any project in the name of the group. We like that. So we're incorporating that idea into our own declaration of intentions.

5. THOU SHALT NOT STEAL. THOUGH SHALT REMIX, CREDIT AND COLLABORATE.

Though we do not require you to ask permission to use FFF's name and research material for remixing under fair usage terms, we do require you to get in touch to let us know what your plans are. This is so that we can define whether there is space for fuller collaborations and combination of forces. The use you intend to make of our material (see our "copyright" statement for long-winded details) and your justifiable level of economic strength also means that if you are going to make commercial use of our work, you need to be a nice, decent person and share something in return. Money is really great, but it's also not the only valuable thing in the world. The idea is to just let us know, be up front and figure things out as we go along. You must also credit us as a group, and if necessary specific members, in any derivative use you make of our work. If you did things any differently, you'd be stealing instead of building.

6. HUMANS ARE IMPORTANT.

Machines are great, but humans are special. If you are a member of the FFF, try to bring real people, with their capacity to commit studied or accidental mistakes, into your work. Don't let your computers dictate all of the possibilities. Live a little more generously, and learn from everyone.