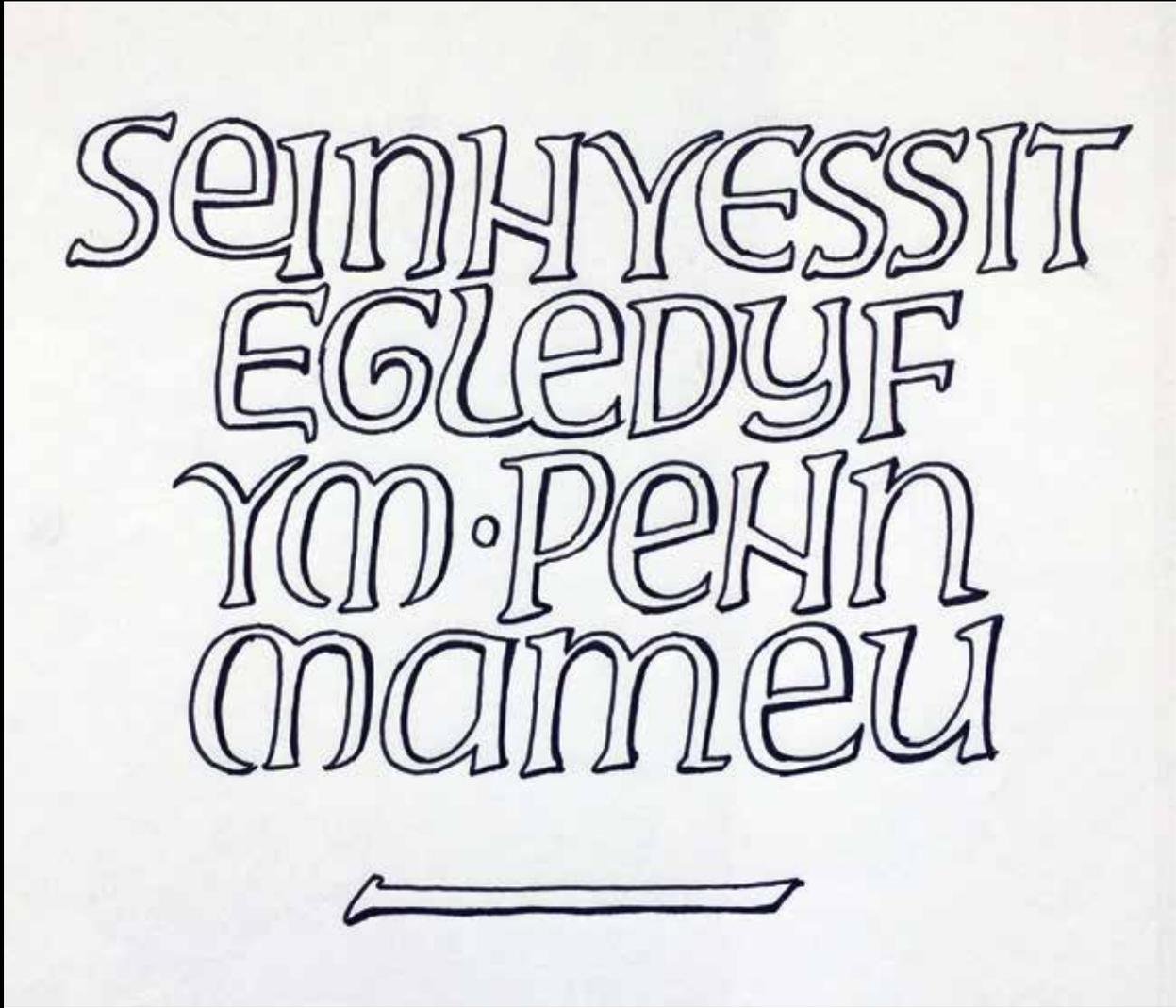


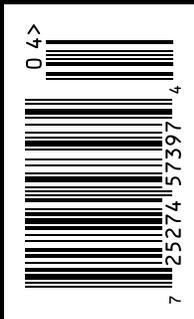
Letter Arts Review

LETTER ARTS REVIEW 31:4 · Sigrid Artmann takes calligraphy out into the world
Lettering and calligraphy in design school · A stroll through the alternative community Christiania



A draft design for the Folio Society's edition of David Jones' IN PARENTHESIS · Ewan Clayton

\$14.50



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An image from Sigrid Artmann's recently published book, Artitüden.



Cups, plates, and bowls are some of the most intimate of objects. Sized to fit in the hand or sit on a table, they are inherently tied to our human bodies, our human scale, and our most basic human need for food and drink. We raise a glass to our lips for a toast; we fill a platter with food.

Such vessels also speak to the complex network of human social relations. At a holiday gathering, we pull out our most beautiful plates and glasses to honor our guests. In religious and civil ceremonies, we employ sumptuous versions of ordinary, daily dining ware. We have done this since the beginnings of civilization. Whether we are sitting at our kitchen table drinking coffee from a mug brought back from a vacation or are sipping wine from a silver chalice in church, we regard the container not only as a practical means to convey liquid to our mouth, but also as a symbol of the things we cherish.

Looking at such vessels from many cultures, we can see that they have often invited decoration with texts. For millennia, lettering artists across the world have adorned these objects with inscriptions. The words written on them feel different from the words we may read in a book or frame and hang on a wall or carve onto the side of a great public building. When I look at the vessels shown on these pages, I cannot help but think of the people who used them. The texts are intimately connected to real people who ate and drank, gathered to share meals, and commemorated things they cared about.

Drinking cups from Ancient Rome (1) and Mesopotamia (2) bear texts extolling the joys of drinking wine—a simple, social pleasure. A plate from early-nineteenth-century Connecticut (4) bears the name of New York City written quickly with yellow slip—a preindustrial souvenir not unlike those we might buy on holiday. A punch bowl (5) made for a member of the Society of the Cincinnati evokes gatherings of men who had served as officers in the American Revolutionary War.

For me, some of the most touching objects are those that bear the signatures of their makers. A bowl from what is today Iraq (6) simply announces the name of its maker—Suhayl.



**Bringing the Inside Out:
A Conversation
with Sigrid Artmann**

By Holly Cohen · Sigrid Artmann's calligraphy pushes boundaries. With playfulness and provocation, she poses questions that invite thoughtful and honest reflections from her audience. She writes beautifully crafted traditional letterforms and striking contemporary alphabets of her own creation. She works on paper and on three-dimensional objects, both in her studio and outside in public spaces.

Having no knowledge of the German language, I initially reacted to Sigrid's work as bold and brash, and it struck me as very commercial. A bit of translation and conversation revealed layers of depth I had utterly missed—a very important reminder of how important communication is, especially today. The following interview was conducted by e-mail and has been edited.

ON TEACHING 1 INTRODUCTORY 1 CALLIGRAPHY & "Illustrated Typography" TO 1 future DESIGNERS

By Christopher Calderhead · Alex Citrin and I both teach in the Undergraduate Communications Design department at the Pratt Institute in Brooklyn. She teaches illustrated typography, and I teach graphic design, typography, and a calligraphy elective. Since we both teach hand-lettering courses, I thought it would be interesting to sit down and compare notes. Our courses are so different—the lettering my students produce in calligraphy is very controlled, formal, and traditional, while her students’ lettering is much more varied and often incorporates much less formal results.

We sat down for an initial face-to-face interview. Ideas flew back and forth so quickly, it was hard to take notes. We were sitting together in the computer lab, so we were able to pull up all sorts of lettering images to share and discuss.

Alex made me laugh when she said, “The best way to find bad lettering is to use Google Images for ‘inspirational quotes.’ Many students seem to start in this cheesy world.” We agreed that one of the challenges of teaching was to open students’ eyes to the wide range of beautiful, engaging, and challenging lettering that is out there.

After a couple of hours, I suggested that I should write up my notes, and we agreed to conduct the rest of the interview over e-mail. Our

e-mail exchanges have been edited for length and clarity.

CC: What do you think is the role of hand lettering in today’s graphic design world?

AC: Well, there’s definitely been a surge in demand for custom hand lettering over the past few years. I think generally it’s a shift away from the clean, hard-edged typographic trends that were dominant through the mid-2000s, and certainly while I was an undergrad. During that time, it felt as though designers wanted to talk about timeless figures like Saul Bass. Right now, though, it feels the pendulum has swung, and designers are drawing influence from movements that were not initially considered timeless but have become iconic in hindsight—Ettore Sottsass comes to mind, as does the reappropriation of early (and crude) Internet design. In other words, kitsch is back, and so is a general return to playfulness. Additionally, with the huge increase in visual content available to everyone right now, customization reigns king in order for work to stand out.

CC: What’s the role of hand lettering within design education?

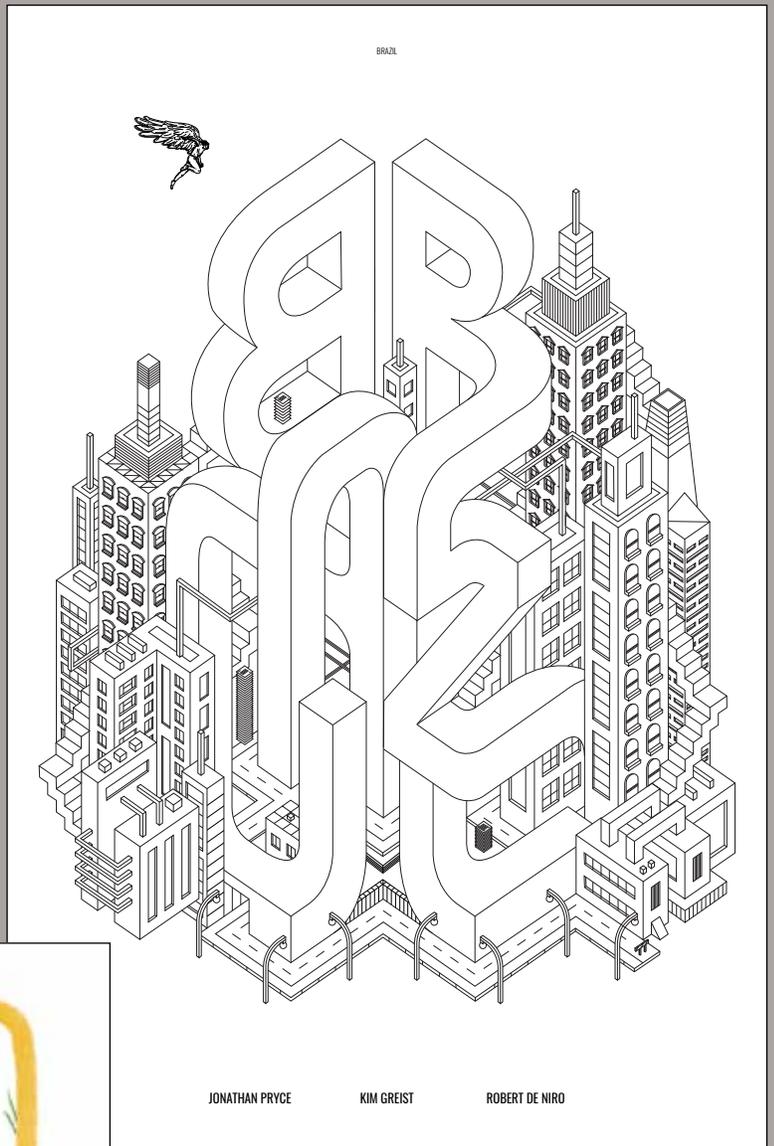
The illustrations in this article come from a CALLIGRAPHY class and a LETTERING class (Illustrated Typography). The captions indicate the class. Unless otherwise noted, all the work has been made by students.

Opposite, top:
LETTERING
Basia Kurlender

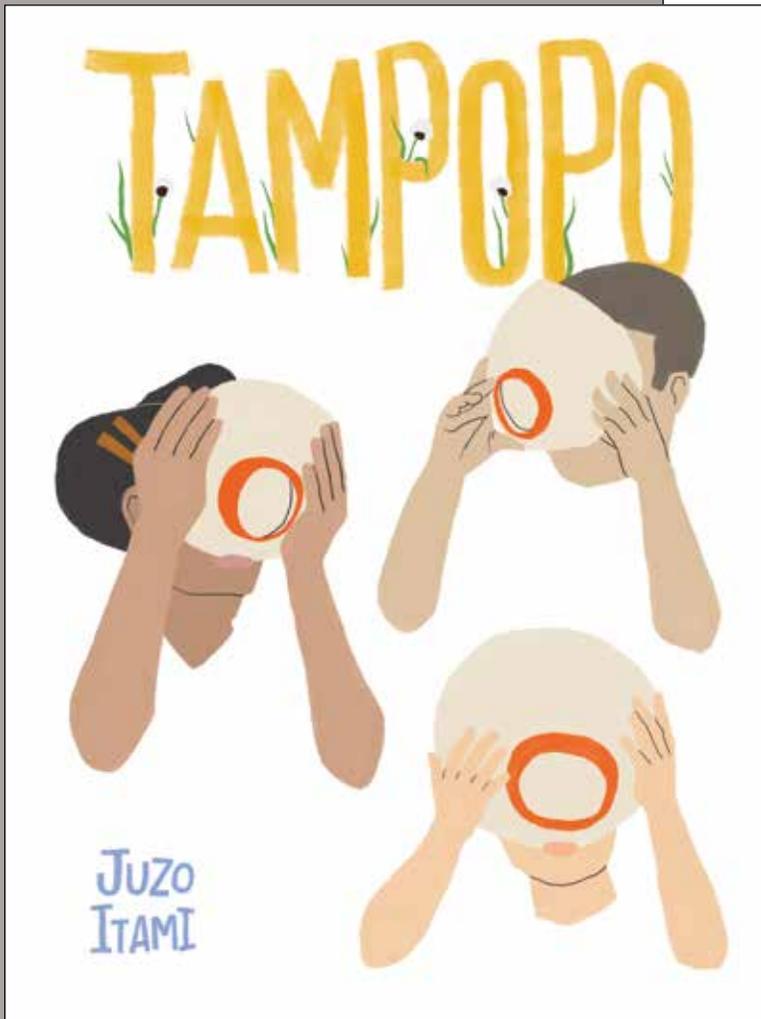
Opposite, bottom:
CALLIGRAPHY
After the introductory calligraphy course, Sandy Chang did a study of three scripts—Carolingian, a Humanist Italic, and Beneventan. These three books were the result. Two are shown with their decorative dustjackets, one without.



LETTERING
A movie poster by Kelly Garrett.



LETTERING
A movie poster by Tomer Ben Yair.



LETTERING
A bodega poster by Grant Davis.



LETTERING
A movie poster by Stacy Kim.

By Holly Cohen · On the last morning of a brief and unexpected trip to Copenhagen, I went for a run a few hours before my return flight to New York. I ran past the old port, randomly turning down side streets with no destination other than a new view, letting myself get lost in order to explore. Seemingly out of nowhere, against a dark and dismal sky, rose a curved concrete entranceway covered in bright colors and graffiti. I stopped short in complete awe. I had no idea where I was or what was on the other side of the yellow and orange striped arch, but like Alice being led down the rabbit hole, I could not turn back. I didn't know at the time that I'd entered Freetown Christiania, an artist and anarchist community founded by squatters who took over an abandoned military space in 1971.

I had entered a kaleidoscope of colors painted on every conceivable surface. Lettering of many kinds, almost all made by hand, both formal and naïve, mingled with psychedelic dream imagery. Here was a settlement where lettering, decoration, and mural art were seamlessly woven into the fabric of daily life.

I found myself drawn inside a dark and ominous looking building that, like everything else, was covered in art. I took my headphones off and turned my camera phone on. A stream of teenagers began flowing in and out of the building, carrying paintings up and down the stairs, and as I contorted my body to stay out of their way on the narrow landing, I felt relieved knowing that I was in some sort of gallery and not trespassing inside a crack house. Light streamed into the landing through arched windows, creating an almost stained-glass effect due to the graffiti and stickers that darkened the glass. I was at Christiania's art museum (Stadens Museum for Kunst), which was on the second floor of the building. The museum was closed, but artwork is everywhere in Christiania.

Back outside, I wandered through a skateboard park that is three-dimensional art in itself. I spoke with a man behind a brightly painted fence who was driving a colorful, graffiti-covered garbage truck, piling refuse and recycling into yet more colorful and graffiti-covered bins. I walked into a shop where a friendly proprietor with a long beard was selling hand-painted t-shirts, and he offered to meditate with me. I stared at the facade of a large housing unit that was painted with murals, political art, slogans, and graffiti. An old woman with a handsome face and long grey braids gave me a tour of her flower and vegetable garden. She showed me her sculptures made from recycled materials and proudly demonstrated her technique of binding trees with cloth to create a bonsai effect. She was an original founder of the community and told me about Pusher Street, where cannabis is sold and photography is prohibited. There was so much more to see, but I was already due back at the hotel and had little time left to make my flight. I was grateful for every random turn I took that morning because I would have left Copenhagen without ever seeing this community where every aspect of life is intertwined with hand lettering art. ♦

