I've always been drawn to letters. As a schoolboy my parents asked me if I wanted to play a musical instrument. I said I would prefer to be taught calligraphy, so once a week I would sit at the kitchen table with the only graphic designer in the town, drawing letters. This was the start of my study of typography, a process which still continues today. Everywhere I go, I am fascinated by what I can learn through my obsessive observations of typography: from paper bags in Kolkata to haulage trucks on the M1 motorway.¹

At the same time I was tackling the relationship between type size, line length and leading. My tutor, Alan May, showed me a small publication entitled *Dimensional relationships in the composition of text* which compared the same piece of text, set in two typefaces (Baskerville and Gill Sans) at five sizes (9, 10, 11 and 12 points) and three line lengths (27, 30 and 33 points). Through actual examples I could immediately see the effect that each variable had on each other: the longer the line length the more leading required.²

Like Twyman’s *Typography without words*, the Stafford paper has remained an important resource. I constantly refer back to both these studies in my own work.³

I have developed my own principles of typography, adding to those theories which are inherited like those illustrated above. Some have made themselves obvious, while others are subconscious or felt, and are harder to articulate in words. These principles are not fixed and have never been written down until now, as they are forever motile and responsive to shifting demands.⁴

Principles are developed over a whole lifetime and form a very personal collection. Typographical decisions that are made, however subtle, become part of a designer’s style.⁵

Keep things simple and make all typographic distinctions clear. Be aware of over-designing. Don’t use many different typefaces in multitudes of different sizes that are slightly different from each other. Make typographic variations obvious: move from regular to bold not regular to medium.⁶

Know when to break the rules and try arrangements that you don’t think will work to get a different perspective. Intentionally doing things that go against the grain of one’s practice can create new possibilities and lead to new directions of work.⁷

Within my work, I engage with the craft that is integral to typography: the patterns and forms made by human effort that illustrate the history of the practice. I am not trying to find the perfect typographical form or arrangement but rather hope to continue in a life-long exploration of choreographing letters on changing pages.²²

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¹ David Atkinson, *Man Smoking*, poster, 2019
² Marcel Bovendeer, solo exhibition catalogue, Milton Keynes Gallery, 2008
⁷ Marcel Bovendeer’s *1349: A Sixteen, Book Art Development Agency*, 2006
¹⁰ After Art Festival, *group exhibition catalogue*, London Gallery West, 2006
¹¹ *Bertamيين* the Long, group exhibition catalogue, *Times Contemporary*, 2012
¹² David Corbett, *Anatomie, Distance, Influenza*, Danielle Arnaud Contemporary Art, 2009
¹⁴ Peter Macdonald, *Atelier Everybody*, Influenza, Art in the Underground, 2009
¹⁶ Sarah Richards, *Changer, moved, Media Art Bank, 2007
¹⁸ A Map of London Art Galleries, *...Jaffar*, 2008

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* Typography with words

FRASER MUGGERIDGE


 peter bauell, *dimensional relationships in the composition of text* in the composition of text, stafford college of art and design, 1976

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