

# Typography Investigation

For my personal investigation and research for my practical work for A-Level Graphic Communication I have chosen to investigate typography, I will look at the many different ways typography has been used in modern day life, like the branding you see for products and adverts. I will be looking at what has mainly influenced my choice of project and how this relates with my investigation. The artists I will be studying are: Nicolas Girard, Craig Ward, Theo Aartsma, Stefan Chinof, Stefano Buffoni, Luke Lucas and Sarah A King as they use typeface and typography in very unique ways which use a variety of techniques including illustration, 3D modelling, and experimental texture use. I have included a variety of examples from other artists working with typography and my responses to them.

My personal investigation will consist of the different ways typography has been used in history and the application of typography in modern day life. The reason I chose to study typography is because I feel that it is an art form that is often overlooked, and people just see typography as words, but it's so much more than 'just words', often with meaning behind it. I feel that typography is an important part of this modern world as it sets people, brands, shops, products etc. apart from each other, making each of them unique and original; if the whole world only used 'Comic Sans' (used by a lot of the world, often associated with younger people because of its ease to read, and is often frowned upon) then the world would look bland, walking down the high street only to see the same font and style everywhere, I feel typography allows individuality.

The first artist I am going to study is Theo Aartsma, a 28 year old designer and illustrator from Holland. His first contact with design and illustration was when he was interested in the creation of electronic dance music (which his work can be related to) and was in need of some promotional material. Soon after this, he followed his passion for illustration and design and has gone onto create pieces for big multinational corporations such as Nike, Toyota and Unicef.

In many of his illustrations Theo incorporates nature; why does he use this theme? –

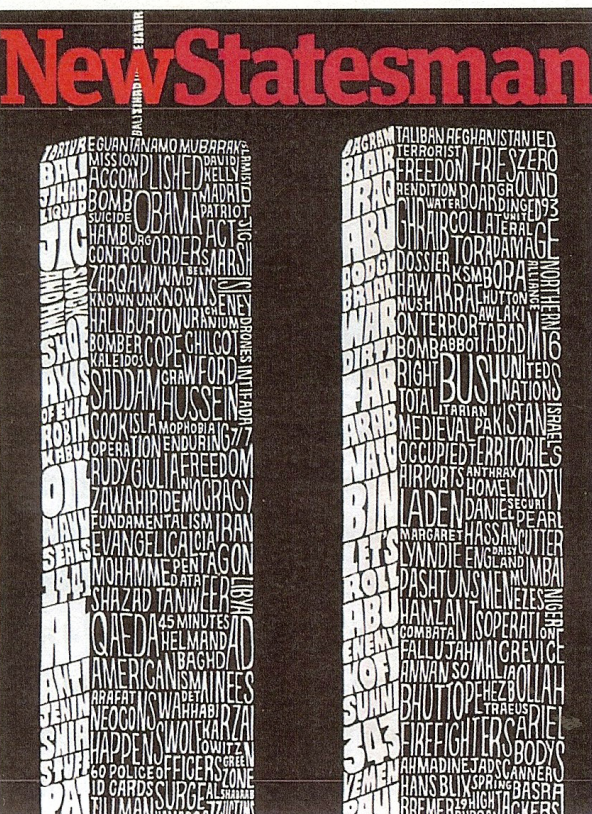
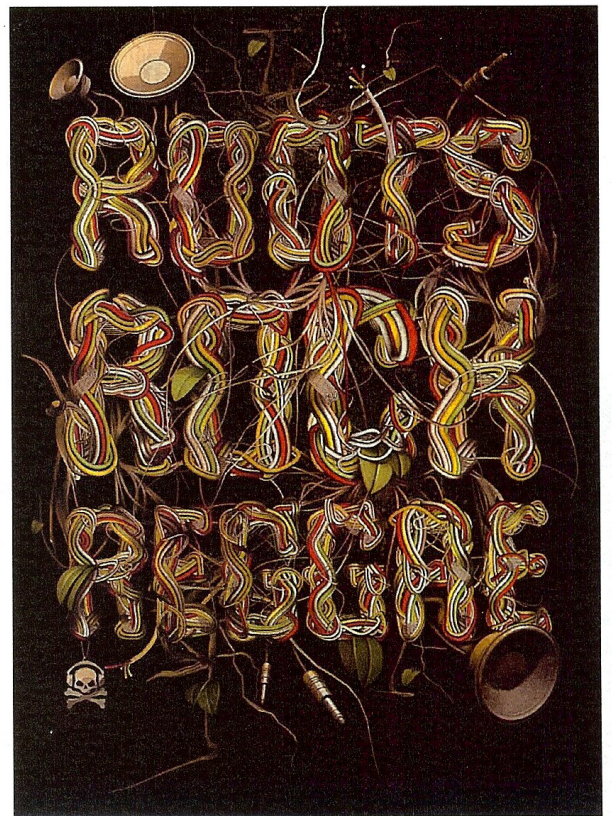
*"The randomness, structures, the colours, all of it. I also like the conceptual side to it. It has meaning of life and it's a little counter synthetic. Which rules the graphics scene of course, with all the industrial letters and colours, geometric shapes and patterns. Bringing a little bit of nature back I find very important."*



(Theo Aartsma, interview with Psdtuts+.)

With this recurring theme of nature, I feel it's becoming ever more important with the modern world as we are slowly moving away from this, and are becoming completely digital with computers and telecommunications. I feel that the world has been turned into a factory, producing our wants and needs, and consideration for the environment has rapidly fallen, and only now has the world seen its effects on our planet. With this in mind, I can create pieces with the theme of nature to develop on this environmental issue, and to show how industry affects the environment in a negative way.

Another influential artist that I am going to research is Sarah A King. She creates art out of words, warping letters to create an image, giving the picture a sort of flow, almost giving it motion. The words used to create the image are relevant to the piece, usually being adjectives, sentences or small poems. She uses a minimal amount of colour in her illustrations, with most of her pieces being in black and



white with greys added to give depth, this minimalist approach allows for the words to stand out, and for you not to be distracted by the colour. Sarah mainly focuses on solid shapes, where she can easily manipulate words to create that particular shape; examples include faces, buildings, vehicles and animals. The illustrations she creates usually have some sort of meaning, or are to do with recent events, such as the World Trade Center made of words describing the event of the crash such as "TERRORIST", "WAR", "GROUND ZERO" AND "BUSH". She seems to size the words on the scale of importance, with more relevant words being larger and more dominant than the rest, so when a person looks at the piece they aren't lost in the mass amount of words and are drawn towards the larger ones allowing for

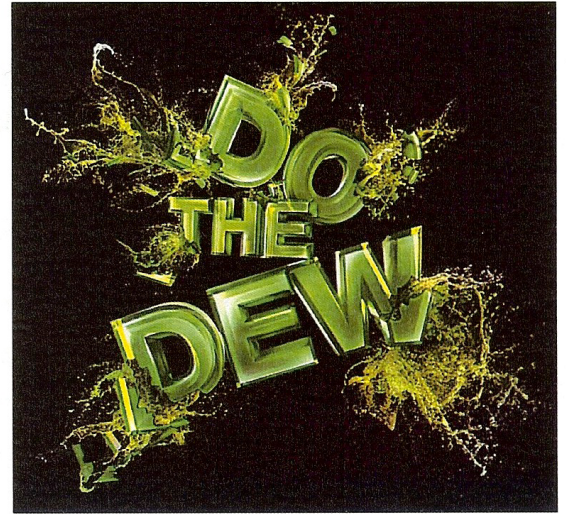
instant recognition of the subject matter. Sarah's typographic illustrations give context to the saying 'a picture is worth a thousand words' quite literally, it's like a story in an image. Her pieces give a very strong message across to the audience as her typography is very easy



to interpret even with a simple shape; she gives meaning to it with words, allowing for very effective representation of an animal, human, object, shape or thing.

I decided to focus more on texture and an elemental feel to typography when I began looking at some artists typographic work, I found that it gave depth to the pieces and gave them an aspect of movement and life. There are three artists that caused me to focus more on texture and elements in typography:

The first artist is Stefan Chinof, born in Bulgaria is an independent artist who specialises in illustration and typography. He creates fonts basing them on a texture that is relevant to the word(s), he has created adverts for companies like Nike, Axe, Mountain dew, and the BBC and has applied this method to give the design fluidity and allows the person to almost taste and smell the design by using very extravagant colours and effects. In most of his typography, Stefan uses liquids to add



texture, with brightly

coloured robust curves it gives a 'juicy' feel, with dripping liquids it gives a 'freshly squeezed' feel, and with a translucent splash it gives you a 'water impact' effect.

The second artist that has influenced me to follow this path of texture and element is Luke Lucas, a 35 year old art director, designer and typographer from Melbourne, Australia. Much like Chinof's work, he uses liquids to give the art piece flow. His fonts are generally quite 'bouncy' looking, or have

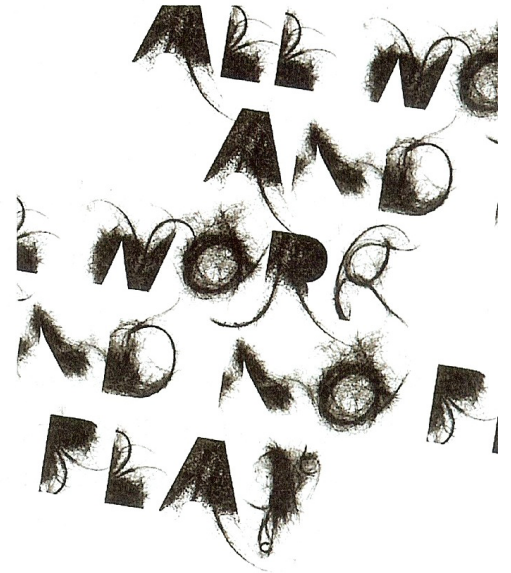
splashes of liquid protruding from the letters to give a splashing effect, or beads of water sitting around the design, or dripping saliva to give the font the visual feel of a tongue, adding as many real life factors as possible, such as temperature, colour, gravity etc. to make it look as realistic as possible. Other pieces that Luke creates are based on elements such as fire and ice, by giving an orange glow around a font to give a heated glow effect, smoke to simulate heat coming from stove coils with a black background to amplify the effect, or shiny blue opaque text with a blue tinted background to give the effect of ice. Luke Lucas' typography has a certain flow that is very pleasing to the eye, with rounded edges and





soft colours.

The final artist is Craig Ward; a 30 year old, London based Graphic Designer, who explores the notion of word as image. Craig gives fonts texture using an unconventional media; he creates these fonts by using actual textures such as rope, rose petals, feathers and shadows. He then manipulates these photos on the computer, giving desired colour and contrast. Craig Ward's typography has a very natural feel, incorporating natural scenery and objects. He also creates images using font, or includes images within the lettering of his fonts.



While researching these artists, my focus has evolved from typography used in modern life to a more natural and organic theme of typography, basing work around nature and natural elements. This piece of typography titles 'Economy' by Theo Aartsma shows the contrast of the environment with greenery, animals and a bright blue aura around the word 'eco', then the letters 'nomy' for economy are completely industrialised with metal, pistons, pipes, energy cells, sparks, smoke and fire with a dark smoky effect around the letters giving a feel of pollution to the lettering.



This piece represents the gradual takeover of the 'economy' by industrialising the world, ruining the Earth's natural beauty in the

name of man. The notion of this is amplified with an effective colour scheme, by having the bright blues and greens to show organic life and purity, whilst the bottom part is made up of dark, dingy colours with browns and greys with patches of orange for fire showing the man made side of this picture, giving a dirty polluted look. The 'eco' letters are deteriorating because the 'economy' is taking over, and is being fuelled by the environments natural resources (coal, oil, gas etc.) I feel that this piece strongly relates to my opinion I talked about previously, as this is a piece that has meaning behind it, it tells us a story.

I have discovered that typography can be used in a whole manner of ways: to give life to a font, represent something, describe something, create something, advertising, branding, and even getting messages across to the world, some very unique and with strong morals. Typography has never had a specific area that it's concentrated, quite the opposite,



as typography is everywhere, you reading this right now is a form of typography; the font used is 'Calibri (Body)', font sizing 12, and aligned to the left of the page, the letters and numbers on your keyboard is a form of typography, as is the number plate on your car, or the lettering on the front cover of the book you are currently reading. The art of typography is performed by typesetters, typographers, compositors, graphic designers, art directors, comic book artists, graffiti artists, clerical workers, and many others who arrange type for a product. Typography can be used for getting a message across or representing something, as I've found with Sarah A King, rather than writing a sentence describing an image, why not create that image using the words that describe the image, or the story behind it.

The work that I have been creating has been very experimental; this was to allow me to get a general idea of how broad typography can be, by working digitally and on paper. I have used many different mediums that have given a large variety of results with different effects and textures, ranging from biscuit crumbs to coloured PVA glue to leaves, flowers and grass, and all the way to fire.

My research is moving more towards the aspect of 'the world we live in' using common found objects, scenery and architecture to create typography with something to relate to so it isn't just a pretty looking font, but a piece of typography that has meaning behind it, topics would include environment, manmade structure and technology.

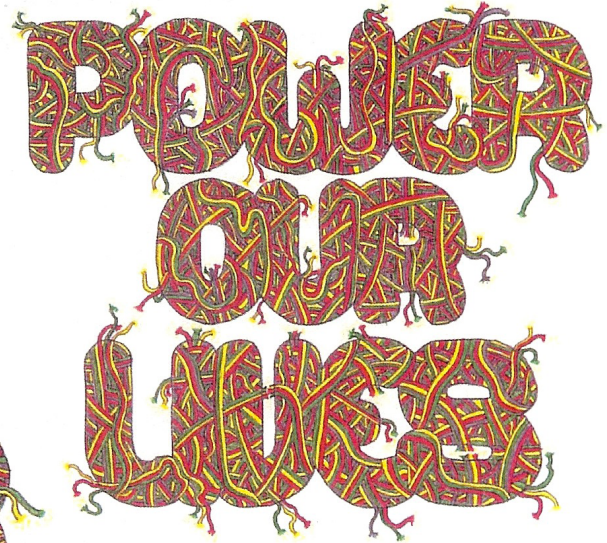
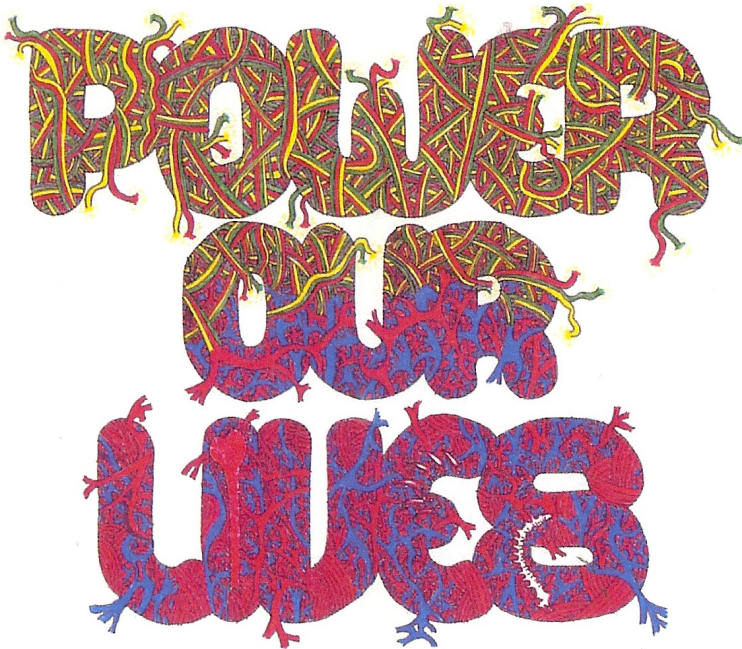
~~My next steps I plan on taking will move~~ more towards the aspect of technology, with the title of 'Power Our Lives' as I feel that the world we currently live in is in a digital age and advancing at an exponential rate. Without this 'power', the world and the economy would go into a state of collapse, we are completely reliant on fuel, electricity and technology, it powers the world, literally fuels the economy, and powers people's lives. Our food is frozen in refrigerators, we communicate via telephone and e-mail, we work using computers and the internet, we rely on electrical boiler systems to keep us warm, and on artificial lighting to allow us to see in the dark, when one day our planet runs out of natural resources, then we'll be left in the dark, countries will be unable to export and import, communications would be down, food and drink would go off very fast, we would have to use another means of transport other than motor vehicles, and banking details would be lost due to information being stored on servers meaning currency would reset; it would effectively be like living in a chaotic medieval era once again. I have chosen to focus more on this topic as our dependence on technology is at a pinnacle, there is so much of it, and technology is only going to advance, this essay has been done on Microsoft Word, with information from the internet, on a laptop which is powered by electricity from the mains which travels via pylons which go directly to the National Grid, where electricity is stored after it has been generated in power plants which get the fuel source from other countries like Russia, Saudi Arabia, and China which use transportation to get to these plants, and there is so much more to this. My generation has grown up with technology all around, television, mobile phones, internet, and digital books, and I feel as though I can represent some of these matters using



typography to give a visual touch to a phrase that is becoming more and more true as technology progresses; 'Power Our Lives'.

In the wires font I used bundles of wires to represent technology and electricity which I made quite distinguishable using bright colours which include red, green and yellow which are common combinations in everyday appliances, as I found out by dismantling many wires. I however felt that I could create a font that has a deeper morale to it and showed even more clearly that technology powers our lives.

My final piece shows the transition between technology and life. The word 'Power' is still made up of bundles of wires, the word 'Our' then shows the gradual transition from wires to veins & arteries, finally leading to the final word 'Lives' which is made up of anatomic features which includes veins, arteries, blood, organs, muscle tissue and bones, almost humanising



the word by giving it human features. This transition between wires and organs gives a stronger representation of technology ruling our lives, and makes viewers think about the piece more, making them realise how reliant we are on technology and power.

I intend to use this final piece as a poster, and will be placed in an

urban environment such as city centres, petrol stations, automatic teller machines (ATM), electronic stores, car parks, super markets and anything really that we use in society to help us mechanically and/or electronically. The poster depicts how inextricably entwined we are now with technology. The target audience for this is intended for everyone, the elderly would look at the poster and think back to times when things were more simplistic, maybe how it excelled work in industry, or maybe make them think of the negative aspects such as war and terror. The younger audiences viewing the poster may be a little naïve to the fact that they have grown up with technology, in my lifetime I have experienced the dawning of the world wide web, mobile technology, and gaming & television being revolutionised with crisp and sharp images and have realised how much I use this technology and take it for



granted. However, not all realise this, and this poster is intended to remind those of what they have and have grown up with, and how reliant we have become on this, like if television was removed from society, many would be lost and wouldn't know how to spend their free time. The main aim of doing this would be to make people think about what they have done in their day, week, month, year, and lifetime which has allowed them to live the life they have, and how they would have got to where they are without it, and also think how technology will affect their futures for work, leisure and health. When viewing the poster they should then think about where they are standing right at that moment and realise how they got there with the aid of technological advances which should make them realise how dependant on technology & electricity the world has become.



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