

Designer and author Jim Krause offers a fresh look at using type to convey emotion, movement, beauty and more.

BY JIM KRAUSE

## PLAYING WITH



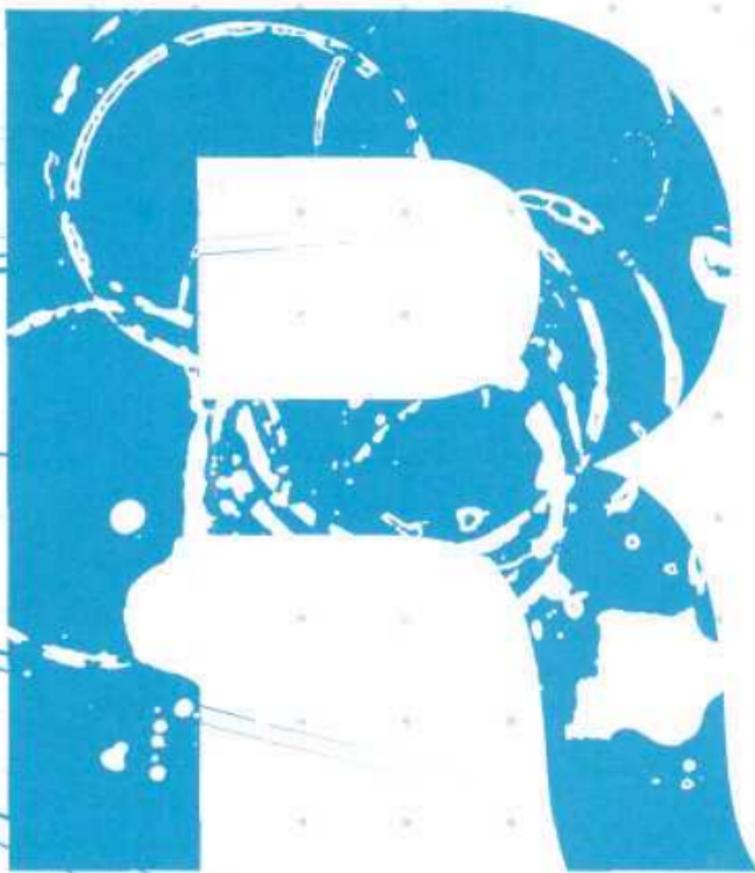
When designers see something—anything from the contemporary typeface used on a CD package to a vintage VW Beetle—the image launches itself through their eyes and ricochets inside their heads like a pinball in an arcade game. As this virtual ball strikes the synaptic pins, lights blink wildly as creative impulses are scored. The main difference between this inner arcade game and an actual pinball machine is that you don't have to put quarters into your head to start the ball rolling—it's automatic and it happens all the time.

That, in a nutshell, is the premise behind "Type Idea Index": that intriguing visuals automatically spark fresh ideas. The type experiments in the following pages offer ideas, inspiration and information to anyone looking for ways to expand their ability to convey themes, deliver messages and communicate information through typography and design. This excerpt offers a peek into five ways of working with type that will get your imagination moving at full tilt.

Flip, flop, clip or crop? Polka-dots? How about a splattering of digital paint? Begin your exploration of disorderly conveyances by bending and breaking the rules of typography—reshaping these rules until they conform to the offbeat conceptual framework of your design.

# REBELLION

Ideas as basic as those shown here contain the seeds of far-flung typographic solutions. When aiming for expressions of rebellion, start small, go over the top and then scale your ideas until they match the visual and conceptual goals you're after.



As opposed to using cyber tools to abuse letter/forms, how about celebrating characters with the help of some real-world effects? "MereT"l stain from an overloaded coffee cup was photographed and digitally combined with a letter/arm to give it an all-too-familiar look of wear and tear. What other kinds of damage could you inflict on typographic forms to elicit unruly results? Such effects could be applied to individual letters, whole words, entire paragraphs or full pages of text.

# ENERGY



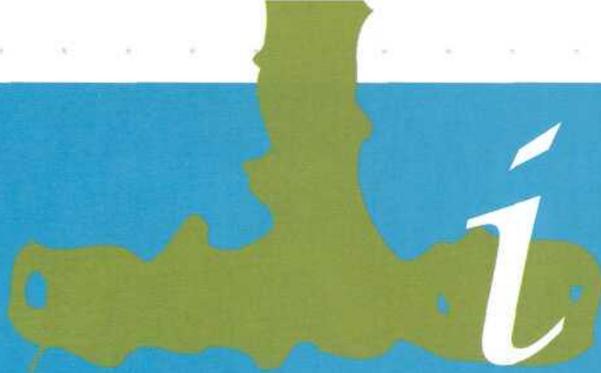
Slanting shapes, overlapping/arms and *lively* organic structures carry strong connotations of vitality. Visual artists of all kinds—including *type* designers—employ aesthetic components such as these to transmit expressions of energy to viewers.



This is a letter made of strong geometric forms. Does this typographic character remind you of any human characters that you know? Embrace anthropomorphism when you work with type.



The interior highlights of many open/ace fonts radiate a sparkling sense of liveliness.



*Expressively handwritten and typed letterforms* resonate with references to their dynamic, hands-on heritage.

Leaning letterforms (italic, oblique) are often seen as the typographic equivalent of vocal intensity.

## A WORD ABOUT FONT SELECTION

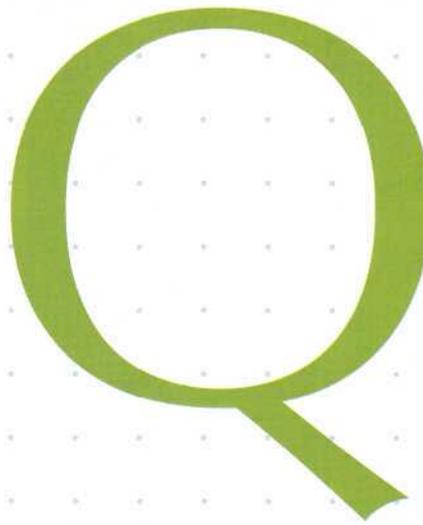
As a science, font selection is about as exact as the routine that witches of old reputedly followed when making pots of potion. Likely as not, the recipe and procedure that a capable designer follows when choosing a typeface goes something like this: Bring one large caydron of current trends to a vigorous boil. Add a pinch of target audience, a dash of client expectations, a handful of typographic history and a spoonful of perceived font personality. Season this mixture with a dusting of the designer's personal preferences and stir continuously until a chosen font arises from the brew.

Sound a bit fanciful? Perhaps—though what formula for the instinctive art and science of font selection would be complete (and truthful!) if it didn't contain ingredients that were both quixotic and quantifiable?

Give your instinct for font selection a solid foundation by expanding and maintaining your base of typographic knowledge and awareness. Take a look at fonts from yesteryear to build an understanding of which fonts can be used to deliver connotations of a certain era or to add kitsch to a contemporary design. Looking backward at font history will reveal typefaces that have been in continuous use for decades (or centuries).

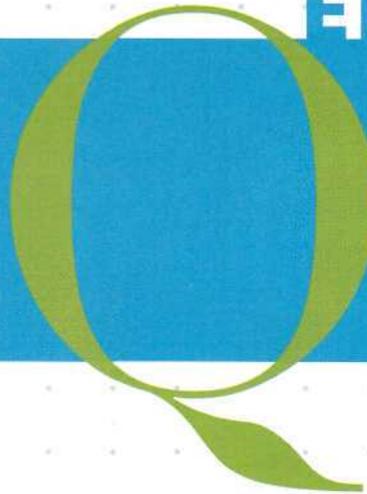
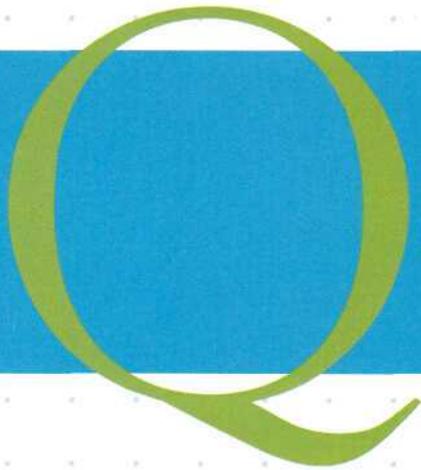
It's worth knowing about fonts with such longevity in their genes, since they're also the ones that will most likely stick around for the next several decades (or centuries).

It's also important to maintain your awareness of what's going on with typography in today's media. Magazines with contemporary content, book jackets and movie titles designed for a progressive-minded audience and design periodicals that feature the work



*Beautiful proportions, tastefully distributed thick and thin strokes, gracefully rendered serifs and exquisite anatomical details (such as the tails of the 'Q's featured "here) characterize the letterforms of many classic roman typefaces. These qualities make them ideal representatives of civility. Train your eye to detect the often tiny differences between the letterforms of various typefaces within this genre. Note the effect these details have on a font's projection of personality. Choose a font that, echoes the persona and message of your text.*

## ELEGANCE

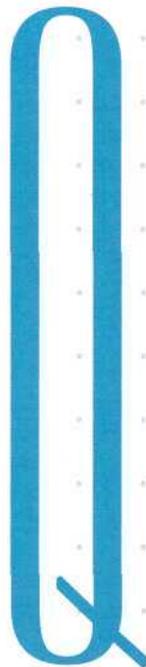


of the field's leaders are excellent sources of forward-thinking type examples. A designer who keeps her creative radar open to these sources gains insurance against falling out of step with typographic fashion.

A last suggestion for building a foundation for effective font selection is to keep tabs on the offerings of font companies and foundries through their online and printed catalogs.

The sheer volume of fonts made available through these sources may seem overwhelming at first, but by consistently spending a little time looking through them, you'll begin to mentally group fonts into definite categories where they can be found when a particular need arises.

When it comes to creating and boosting communicative magic through typography, use ingredients that spring from both instinctive and logical origins.



How about employing a font that possesses the extravagant qualities of a slender skyscraper—exuding excess and calling attention to itself through its striking individuality?



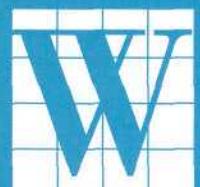
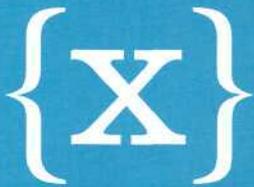
When you're seeking utmost (or even over-the-top) connotations of opulence, canvass the lexicon of richly rendered blackletter, script and open-face joints for candidates.



Consider using a thin sans serif face to channel themes of elegance through the essential simplicity of its letterforms.

Type can be visually injected with technical (or pseudo-technical) graphic elements to infuse designs with notes of planning and precision.

# ORDER

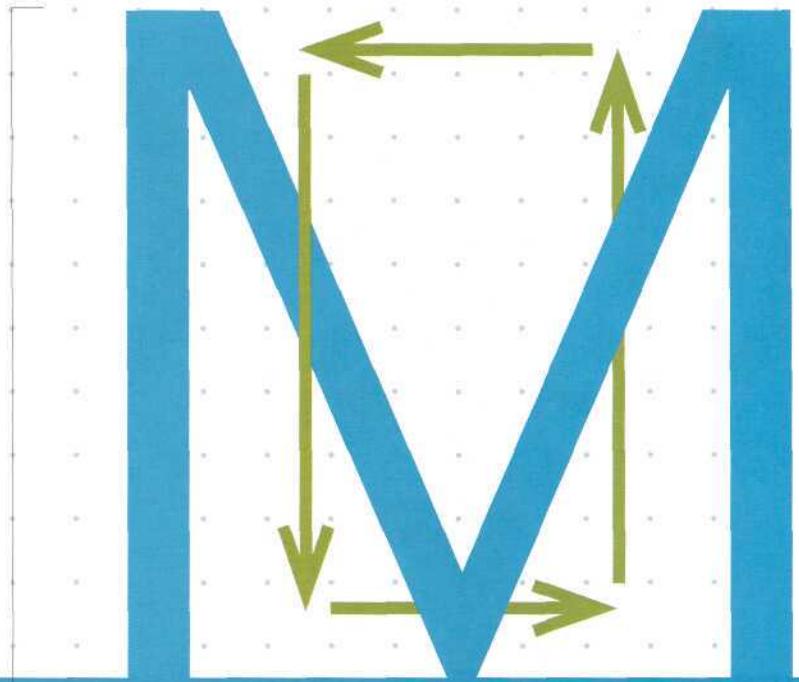


*Punctuation can add a sense of containment and finality to a textual element by virtue of its compositional presence and textual significance.*

*Bold shapes can be used to both frame and bring a sense of discipline to a rambunctious font.*

*Neat linework and simple shapes can be used to establish orderly environs for type. How about using fine and type weights that contrast with each other? What about using letter/line weights that appear the same?*

*Consider using a grid behind—or within—typographic elements to project structure and organization.*



## LETTERSPACING ADJUSTMENTS

When you compose a word using your computer's keyboard, the document that contains your chosen font generates both the visible characters and the seemingly imperceptible spaces between the letters and words. Consider these spaces and how they might be adjusted when a word is being used for display purposes such as a headline or logo.

After keying your headline or logo type into the computer, magnify it to nearly fill the screen. Now move back from the monitor and squint your eyes at the word (squinting helps accentuate "dark spots" and "holes" within the word—areas where characters seem too crowded or too loosely spaced). After identifying problems, return to the keyboard and make adjustments in letterspacing until the overall visual tone of the word appears consistent.

Rely on your eye—not a ruler—to tell you when the characters of a word are properly spaced. Try focusing on sets of three adjacent letters at a time; adjust the spacing within these sets until each trio

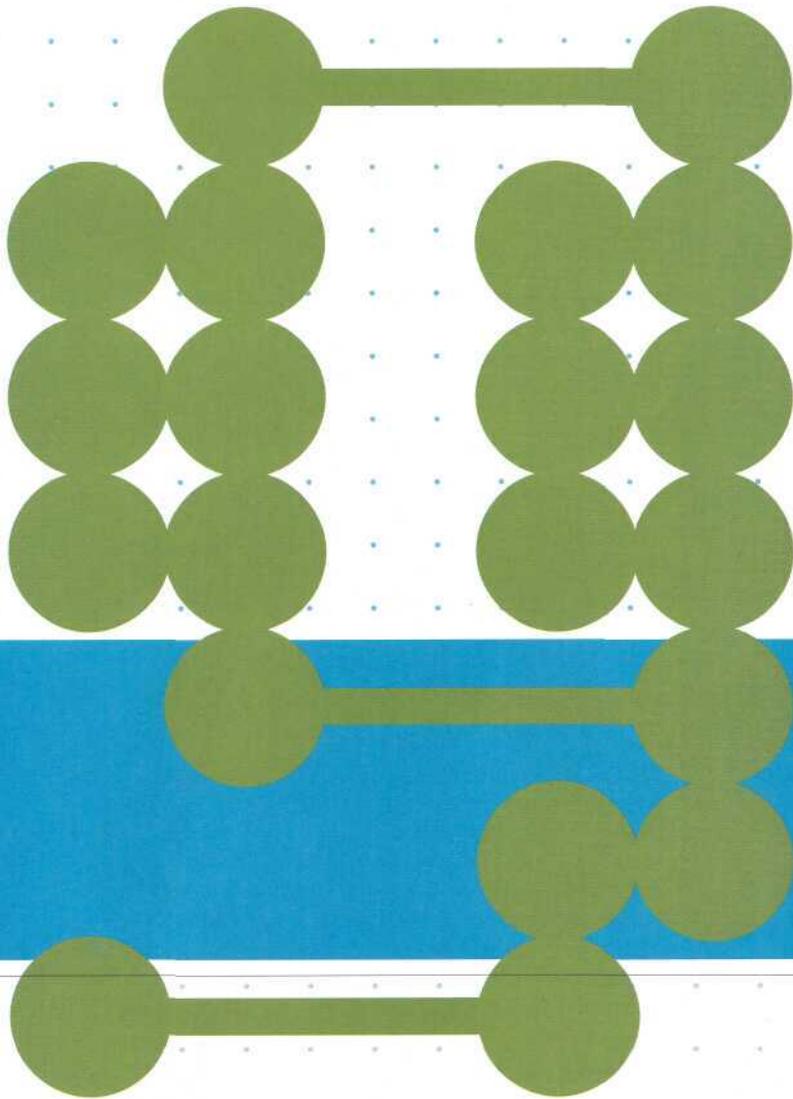
appears to abide by the same standard of spacing. If you're unsure of the accuracy of your letterspacing eye, ask for feedback and assistance from experienced designers until you gain confidence.

Adjustments in letterspacing can be made using design software letterspacing controls or by converting letterforms to paths and moving the characters manually.

Compare the default spacing in KATYDID (right) with the adjusted spacing in KATYDID (lower right). Squint at both samples and note the uneven visual tone of the first when compared to its modified counterpart.

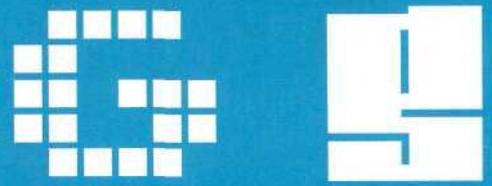
Tighter than normal spacing often calls for subtle character alterations that take care of awkward junctures between letters. (Characters must first be converted to paths if they're to be altered.)

Letterspacing considerations apply equally to uppercase and lowercase words.



In all forms of *art* typography included),\* futurism is often expressed through a *rethinking and* paring down of traditional rules and concepts. Compare the tried-and-true sans serif 'g' on the left above (Helvetica) with the modern sans serif character\* to its right (Reykjavik). The newer letterform has given up a measure of grace in exchange for a look of simplicity that carries characteristics of modernity. Forward-thinking *typefaces* \* such as this make good candidates for designs that are meant to deliver progressive connotations.

## TECHNOLOGY



In order to generate more exaggerated *effects of* technology and science, certain fonts are designed using highly geometric structures, fetters that appear distorted by the effects of light and characters that mimic the ways that letterforms are displayed through electronic media. A wide spectrum of expression is available within this genre—from serious to silly, and from realistic to whimsical.

### DEFAULT LETTERSPACING

These characters aren't evenly spaced—note the discrepancy between the spacing of the letters.

Note how the default spacing has made distinct visual groups out of the letters. Try squinting at this sample to make these groups stand out more clearly.

KATYDID

Katydid

### ADJUSTED LETTERSPACING

Now the visual tone of the word appears consistent. Allow characters to touch if it helps achieve even visual spacing throughout the word. Adjustments such as these can be subtle: The light blue characters in the sample below indicate the position of the original letterforms before they were moved.

After adjusting the letterspacing, the serif on the diagonal stem of the 'K' was shortened so that it would not awkwardly crowd the a (which has been moved slightly to the left).

KATYDID

Katydid