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Different Approaches to Typography “A Font Design for Nil Türkkan”

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ABSTRACT

Font design, which is the main unit of typography, is one of the most valuable fields of graphic design. Many designers who are familiar with typography benefit from ready-made fonts. In the documentary film *Helvetica* directed by Gary Hustwit (2007), famous Italian designer Massimo Vignelli argues that type characters should not mean anything, unlike designers who think type design should have the power of expression. This study does not aim to create a readable and useful typeface as suggested by Vignelli, but rather a font design that is produced from the sketches of a child and aims to give the childish feeling completely without any consideration of readability. Graphic designers are of course interested in typography and letters every second, but not everyone is a font designer. One of the important steps of being a good typography user is thought to be the production of at least one font family design. The purpose of this study is to provide an experimental point of view of font-family design while discussing the necessity of creating a system and the importance of each detail in font design.

Keywords: Typography, Font design, Graphic design, Childhood drawings.

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1. Introduction

“Although typefaces have therefore been shown to serve functional outcomes, the work cited so far tends to focus on non-aesthetic differences in type usage and tends to be divorced from the aesthetic considerations of graphic designers in their use of typography.” (Haenschen & Tamul, 2019, 2). Sanocki and Dyson describe the classical goal of type design as the achievement of harmony and balance between individual forms (2012, 132-133).

Fonts are used in the written world every day in many media; papers, computers, mobile phones, etc. I want to design a typeface based on my daughter’s drawings, which can be used in any media as an experimental font family. The main purpose of this study is to create a combination of the independent structures in a font design by getting creative, free and entertaining drawings of a child from the walls and transfer them to the field of typography, and as a result, to obtain a joyful, original

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and experimental font design. The striking point of this typeface of Nil Türkkan is that it emphasizes a child's imagination and freedom. Typeface design is distinguished by universal and typeface-specific characteristics; and universal design characteristics are subjective descriptions of the typeface, including characteristics such as symmetry, activity, and complexity according to Henderson, Giese, and Cote (2004, 61). Harris and Ambrose say font decision-making is made difficult because it is estimated that there are over 100000 digital fonts available; these fonts are no longer just physical objects in the digital age which means a graphic designer has more options available regarding font usage that offer more opportunities for control and manipulation (2009, 34-36).

Many new digital fonts are being designed every moment. As a graphic designer, I experience how important font selection is in professional life. However, the typeface produced in this study was not designed to be used in a professional environment, and the result was considered as a different experimental font design by focusing on how a child sees the letters. The typeface to be designed in this study is in the universal category, the purpose of the design is to create a fun font that covers every language. Besides, the thesis advocated in this study is not only a necessary and serious design area for font design, but it can also turn into an experimental area where functionality is not in the foreground and reflects only the feelings of the child. The concept that is already discussed in this article is how wide the range of font design can be handled.

2. Methodology

In this article, it is discussed whether or not to use experimental studies while producing a font design, concerning the hundreds of drawings that a child sketches on the walls at the age of 2 years. It is aimed to take 70 selected samples into a font system design.

3. Font design

“Each font is a unique family of signs produced by the designer for the formal expression of sound. These forms, which we call letters, emerge as a result of a careful working process that requires individual effort. I think it would be more meaningful to describe the process of designing a font as the “type character” rather than the “typeface” because of the essence of this complex and difficult action. The reason for my proximity to the “type character” from these two similar definitions is the “character word” in it. After all, the resulting object is more than a type, it is an embodiment of a separate personality and character. The aim beyond creating this form is creating a concept, a character, and a hidden visual story within it.” (Uçar, 2019, 230).

In support of Uçar's statement above, designing a font is strongly related to creating a character by using letters. Like all other design processes, font design is a design field created with great effort and through a long hard process.

Cyrus Highsmith describes in the “Type Design” Chapter in *Graphic Design Process Book* that the challenge in designing original typefaces is to invent the requirements with beginning by imagining a publication or use for his type: “I think about it as a way of storytelling. A typeface plays a role always in a story, so in a way I think of the story it's going to be a part of. I don't mean it has to illustrate something from the story—it could represent the voice of the author, the publisher; it could evoke the setting; it could be something to do with one of the characters; there are a lot of ways to do it. There's also the functionality—the usage—which is important, but to me the interesting part is what story the typeface is part of and what's its role in that story?” He notes that this method is similar to the process that designers go through when they choose a typeface. (Skolos&Wedell 2012, 50)

3.1. Creating a font design for Nil Türkkan

“While these contextual relationships often suggest a specific style or approach to a lettering problem, the unlimited possibilities of lettering and type accommodate numerous individual interpretations. Even subtle changes to the appearance of letters can alter the content's voice. Designers sometimes add new perspectives or layers of meaning by introducing an unexpected approach or contrast.” (Willen & Strals, 2009, 5). As Willen and Stral mention, the main concept of making letters of Nil Türkkan and creating a font design for her is to inject her creativity into letters by using her style, thus discover her style in terms of letters, numbers, and punctuations.

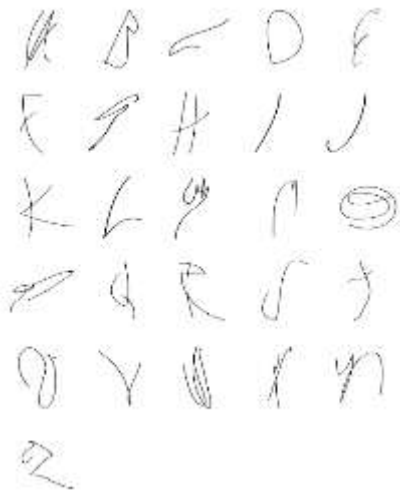


Figure 1. Letters of the font for Nil Türkkan

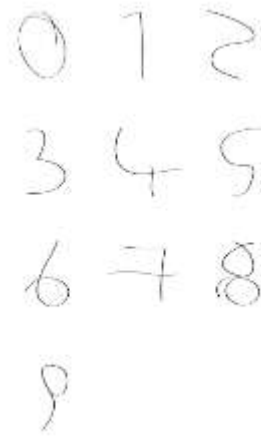


Figure 2. Numbers of the font for Nil Türkkan



Figure 3. Punctuations of the font for Nil Türkkan

The concept of Nil Türkkan's font is developed from her unique sketches painted on walls. Even if the starting point of the font is drawings and scribbles of a child, a rigorous result as a clean design system was tried to be obtained.



Figure 4. Examples of wall paintings of Nil Türkkan, 2018



Figure 5. Examples of wall paintings of Nil Türkkan, 2018



Figure 6. Examples of wall paintings of Nil Türkkan, 2018

Osterer & Stamm shares the thoughts of Adrian Frutiger for the font "Président" he designed:

"For me it was a really nice job because it was always about the highest quality. Président was supposed to be a means of expression for personalities and as beautiful and balanced as possible. I quickly forgot about it, with all that followed. Now though, when I look at it again, I'm quite astonished. It already clearly demonstrates my style – a mixture of both my teachers' influence and my very own personal idea of form. I don't mean convention or an ideal that would be too philosophical. If a typeface looked good I simply felt real satisfaction. The tiniest mistake instantly hit my eye. I feel that the 'look' of type was complete inside me when I left the Kunstgewerbeschule. Of course I was to learn a lot more, but the style was already there." (2014, 33)

Considering that Frutiger always blends what he learned from his teachers and masters with his character in font designs, the desired phenomenon is reached in this study. A font design was created by dealing with the scribbles that are thought to reflect the character of a child to form a whole, a system. The completeness mentioned by Frutiger is already manifested in the sketches of the child. The

style of the font reveals itself without any extra effort. As can be observed in the figures above, it can be mentioned that even a child draws with a certain discipline and create with rules.

Jay Roeder says in “Embracing imperfection” Chapter of “Design: Type” Book of Burgess, the reason that he enjoys hand-drawn lettering so much is because it is uncharted territory, where the rules on traditional typography can be broken, as different as hand lettering appears to be at times, a foundation in typography is an absolute necessity. He explains the reason for being a fan of hand lettering primarily because it adds a human side to an otherwise computer-dominated era of typography. (2012, 142)

4. Conclusion

In addition to being a graphic design area that prioritizes the legibility of the text, aims to be read, and which we treat letters as a system, font design can also appear as an experimental design field produced with personal preferences. As well as making use of font sites where typography is considered academically, we also encounter up-to-date and informal font designs on new websites every day. As stated above, this study has questioned the idea of turning a child's freedom into a font family based on the free drawings she made on the walls (Figures 4,5,6) at the age of 2 years, and as a result, a free and non-readable, but usable productive handwriting font design result (Figures 1,2,3). Although it is believed that the use of typography as cultural infrastructure, a font design produced experimentally with references from daily life may also result in a design that will contribute to “experimental typography”.

Tselentis thinks today’s designers spend countless hours in their studios searching out and creating new forms like the earliest type-casters, type compositors and printers who experimented with inks, paper, and lead. Sometimes, these investigations help the client solve a problem, the designer pushes and pulls typography following their directives to explore shape, texture, meaning, or plain old function there are opportunities to see things in fresh ways and render them as their own. When designers operate in such an experimental laboratory, they fulfill one of Bradbury Thompson’s principles of finding an intellectual stimulant. Because of the wealth of media available, designers can hybridize any production tool as well as any existing image into a fresh solution. And while we seem to have left behind all notions of appropriation or borrowing from period styles, designers continue to be influenced by what came before them. Along with the fast development of modern technology, fonts assume a wide variety of new forms and functions; many types have evolved, including image and movement and fonts are no longer mere tools for visual communication (Curralo & Soares, 2015, 704). As computer technology continues to evolve, type designers will have their fonts projected on high-definition displays, which may, one day, exceed the resolution offered in print media. Although digital media has won over a majority of practicing designers, many continue to work with hands-on traditional tools, going so far as to sculpt paper or culture bacteria in the search for something new. Or just to entertain themselves in between client jobs (Tselentis, 2011, 163). As Curralo and Soares declare, the shape and appearance of type designs can be manipulated to suggest moods or feelings (2015, 704).

This study can be seen as experimental work to entertain me with the joyful design solution taken from my girl’s hands which inherent beauty, fun, emotion, and uniqueness with the combination of the handwritten variants.

And finally, the goal of producing a font design which has visual language integrity that does not have to be functional has been achieved that can contribute to the font design community, even from the random drawings that an illiterate little child transfers to the walls, inspired by her surroundings.

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